HISTORY OF
First Reformed Church
READING, PENNSYLVANIA
1753 - 1953

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TWO HUNDREDTH ANNIVERSARY

HISTORY OF

First Reformed Church

Reed and Washington Streets

READING, PENNSYLVANIA

By

REV. DANIEL J. WETZEL, D.D., *Pastor*

PUBLISHED BY THE CONSISTORY

September 1953

Dedicated

To the congregation of First Reformed Church which, during my pastorate, has evidenced high endeavor, missionary zeal, Christian charity and Christian vision; and to the cherished memory of the Pastors and people who have shared in the fellowship of its work and worship.

Introduction

We wish to warn our readers that this history, covering a period of two hundred years of the continuous life of First Reformed Church, Reading, Pennsylvania, will of necessity be presented more in the form of an outline than that of a complete history. We consider it more advisable to present as many highlights as possible than to select only a few for elaborate treatment.

Let us begin by orienting ourselves in the place and time of the beginning of the congregation. The place is Reading, Pennsylvania, and the year of the founding of the congregation is 1753.

Though the town was several years in process of founding, the year 1748 is the accepted year of its official establishment. It was laid out by Thomas Penn, son of William Penn. There is no evidence that Richard and John Penn, brothers of Thomas, gave any substantial assistance in the administration of the property affairs of the vast Penn estate or of the planning for the city of Reading.

The area in which the town is situated is confined chiefly to the east bank of the Schuylkill River. It lies in a bowl-like terrain, surrounded by hills and mountains on all but the west side. The proximity of the surrounding rising hills gives one a sense of security and protection. In 1748, the area was a forest with Delaware Indian tribes located within what is now the city proper.

The nomenclature used in the naming of our county, city, and city streets, bears the evidence of English influence. Berks County was named for Berkshire, England, where all of the Penns of that early generation once resided. Reading is named for Reading, England, the birthplace of William Penn. Our city streets, at the time of the adoption of the city plan, were named as follows: Penn, for William Penn, the first Proprietor; Callowhill (Fifth) Street for his second wife, Hannah Callowhill; Richard (Franklin) and Thomas (Washington) Streets for sons of William Penn who became the Proprietors of the Province; Margaret (Walnut) Street

for Margaret Freame, elder sister of Thomas and Richard Penn; Hamilton (Chestnut) Street in commemoration of Governor James Hamilton. Then there were also a number of royal names, such as King (Third) Street; Queen (Fourth) Street; Prince (Sixth) Street; and Duke (Seventh) Street. Ninth Street was named Clement in honor of Simon Clement the Bristol merchant, friend and relative of the founder. Eleventh Street was named Vigour for William Vigour, friend of Thomas Penn and overseer of the Penn estates in Berkshire. Thus it can be seen that filial devotion and regal loyalty were revealed in the names given our streets by the founders of Reading. However, on August 6, 1833, all street names were changed by an act of City Council except Penn Street. In this connection, I. Daniel Rupp, author of the "History of Berks and Lebanon Counties," comments that the new names are "more compatible with the republican simplicity of our present form of government." He quotes this last phrase and we assume it to be from the action of City Council.

In the Ferny Meadow, which is the meaning of the name "Reading," there stood but one house in 1748. By 1752, according to Benjamin Franklin's Pennsylvania Gazette, there were counted 208 houses. The following year, 1753, marks the founding of First Reformed Church.

The earliest settlers in Reading and vicinity were the English, Swedes, Welsh, French and Germans. By the year 1748, the Germans far outnumbered the combined population of all the other groups, both in town and county.

Churches in Reading were established in the following order: the Friends (date uncertain); Lutheran, 1751; Reformed, 1753; Catholic, 1756; Anglican, 1761.

The early settlers who constituted the membership of the Lutheran and Reformed Churches when they were organized were Germans who came chiefly from the Rhine Valley (The Palatinate), and the German Cantons of Switzerland. Those who came prior to 1727 were usually families of considerable means while those who came

in the great immigrations of 1728, 1729, 1741, 1750 and 1751 were generally persons of little means. Many of these in the latter groups were compelled by necessity to sell their services to earlier settlers to pay for their passage. But out of this group of "redemptioners" arose some of our most distinguished families in later Pennsylvania history; men and women who were true patriots and loyal supporters of the church. It is assumed by some historians that these early immigrants were practically all farmers. Many were farmers but Doctor Benjamin Rush listed among them weavers, tailors, tanners, shoemakers, comb-makers, smiths, butchers, bakers, paper-makers and clock-makers.

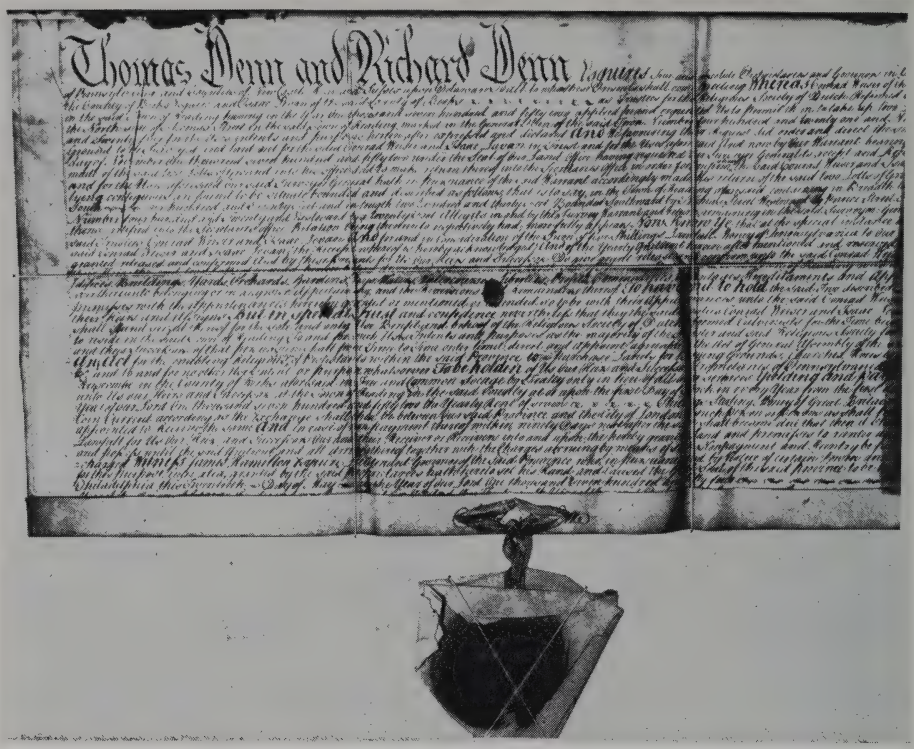
Thus far we have looked briefly into the general environment in which First Reformed Church had its beginning. Let us turn now to the events which led to its organization and development.

The Acquisition of Land

The land upon which the present church edifice stands at Reed and Washington Streets has been the permanent home of the congregation since its founding. The lots were obtained from Thomas and Richard Penn, sons of William Penn, proprietors of Penn's Woods which later became the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. The petition for the acquisition of the land was made in 1752 by Conrad Weiser and Isaac Levan, acting as trustees for the "Religious Society of Dutch Reformed Calvinists," which was desirous of organizing a congregation and erecting a place of worship. Conrad Weiser was a member of the Lutheran Church and the well-known mediator between the Colonial Government and the Indians. He was also the representative of Thomas Penn. Isaac Levan was a member of the Reformed Church. The patent for the land was issued May 20, 1754, for contiguous Lots, Numbers 421 and 424, each measuring sixty by two hundred and thirty feet, located along Washington Street and bounded on the West by North Sixth Street and on the East by Reed Street.

Our evidence that the petition for lots for the purpose of building a church thereon was made in 1752 is recited in the patent by which the request was granted and reads as follows:

"THOMAS PENN and RICHARD PENN ESQUIRES True and absolute Proprietaries and Governors in Chief of the Province of Pennsylvania and Counties of New Castle, Kent and Sussex upon Delaware To all to whom these Presents shall come Greeting WHEREAS Conrad Weiser of the Town of Reading in the County of Berks Esquire and Isaac Levan of the said County of Berks as Trustees for the *Religious Society of Dutch Reformed Calvinists residing in the said Town of Reading having in the year One thousand seven hundred and fifty two* applied for and requested Us to permit them to take up two Lotts of Ground on the North side of Thomas Street in the said Town of Reading marked in the General Plan of the said Town *Number Four hundred and twenty one and Number*



First Patent for Lots which were Nos. 421 and 424. Issued to Conrad Weiser and Isaac Levan, acting as trustees for the congregation, May 20, 1754. Request made in 1752. Great Seal of Province of Pennsylvania attached. (Congregation is in possession of four such seals.)

Four hundred and Twenty four for the uses intents and purposes herein after expressed and declared AND We favouring their Request did order and direct the said Two Lotts of Ground to be surveyed and laid out for the said Conrad Weiser and Isaac Levan in Trust and for the Uses aforesaid *And now by our Warrant bearing date the seventh day of November One thousand seven hundred and fifty two under the Seal of Our Land Office* having required our Surveyor General to accept and Receive the Survey so made.

"NOW KNOW YE that at the special instance and request of the said Trustees Conrad Weiser and Isaac Levan AND for and in Consideration of the Sum of five Shillings Lawfull Money of Penn-

sylvania to our Use Paid by the said Conrad Weiser and Isaac Levan the Receipt whereof is hereby acknowledged And of the yearly quitrent herein after mentioned and reserved.

"TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the said Two described Lotts of Ground and premisses with the appurtenances hereby granted or mentioned or intended so to be with their Appurtenances unto the said Conrad Weiser and Isaac Levan their Heirs and Assigns BUT IN SPECIAL TRUST and confidence nevertheless that they the said Trustees Conrad Weiser and Isaac Levan and their Heirs shall stand seized thereof for the sole and only use Benefit and behoof of the Religious Society of Dutch Reformed Calvinists for the Time being residing and to reside in the said Town of Reading, To and for such Uses intents and purposes as the majority of the Minister and said Religious Society for the Time being and their Successors of that persuasion shall from time to time order limit direct and appoint agreeable to the Act of General Assembly of the said Province Entitled AN ACT for the enabling Religious Societies of Protestants within the said Province to purchase Lands for Burying Grounds, Churches, Houses for Worship, Schools etc., and to and for no other Use Intent or Purpose whatsoever.

"AND PAYING therefore Yearly unto Us Our Heirs and Successor at the Town of Reading in the said County at or *upon the first day of March in every year from the first day of March in the Year of Our Lord One thousand seven hundred and fifty two* the yearly rent of seven Shillings Sterling Money of Great Britain or value thereof in Coin Current according as the Exchange shall then be between our said Province and the City of London to such person or persons as shall from Time to Time be appointed to Receive the same.

"WITNESS JAMES HAMILTON ESQUIRE Lieutenant Governor of the said Province who, in pursuance and by Virtue of certain Powers and authorities to him for this purpose, inter alia, granted by the said Proprietaries hath hereto set his Hand and caused the Great Seal of the said province to be hereunto affixed

at Philadelphia, *this Twentieth day of May in the Year of Our Lord One thousand seven hundred and fifty four*.....the Twenty seventh year of the Reign of George the Second over Great Britain etc., And the Thirty sixth Year of the said Proprietaries Government,

"ENTERED in the office for Recording of Deeds for the City and County of Philadelphia in Pat. Book A Vol. 17 Page 504 and the sixth day of August A. D. 1754, AS Witnesseth my Hand and Seal of my Office.

C. Brockmaker

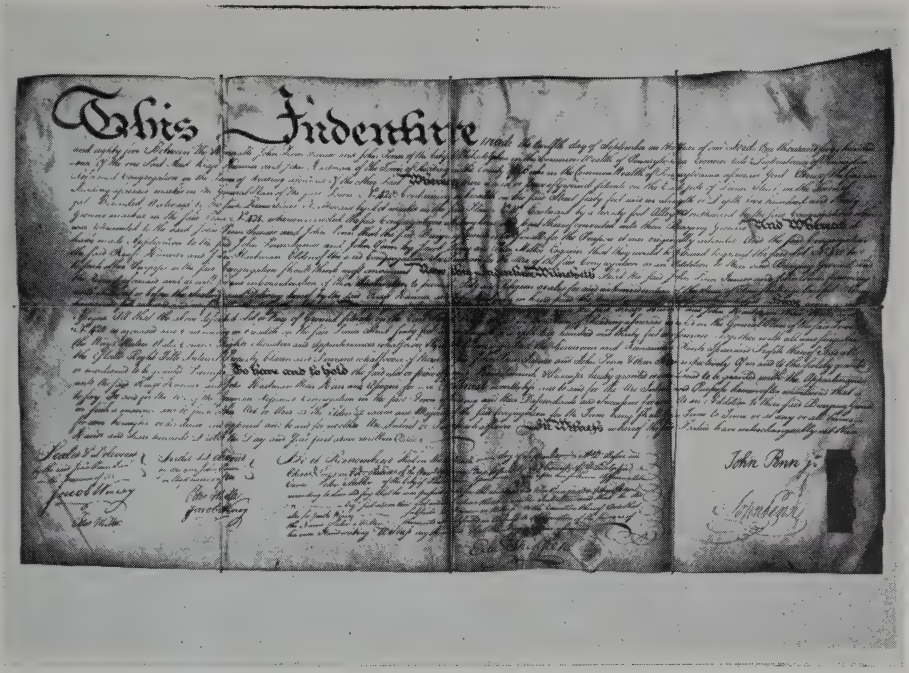
?

"Patent to Conrad Weiser and Isaac Levan for 2 Lotts of Ground in the town of Reading, in Berks County in Trust for the Religious Society of Dutch Reformed Calvinists in said County." (Italics are mine.)

In this quotation from the Patent we have the reason why the present Pastor is of the opinion that the date of the organization of First Reformed Church should be 1752 instead of the date long since established which is 1753. Does not the request for land upon which to build a church, as was made by named trustees, presume some organization? We think so.

The annual "Quit Rent" was seven Shillings sterling money of Great Britain or "the value thereof in coin current as the Exchange shall then be between said Province and the city of London." It was by means of the "Quit Rent" that purchases were made. Such rents constituted a continuing income to the seller for an indefinite period. "Quit Rents" were abolished by process of law by the State Legislature, November 27, 1779. We note with interest that this legal action took place but three years after the year of our Independence, 1776.

A cemetery adjoined the church property which was later enlarged by the purchase of additional lots as the needs of the growing congregation demanded. Mr. Winfield Fisher, a member of the congregation, has made a careful survey of the title references as

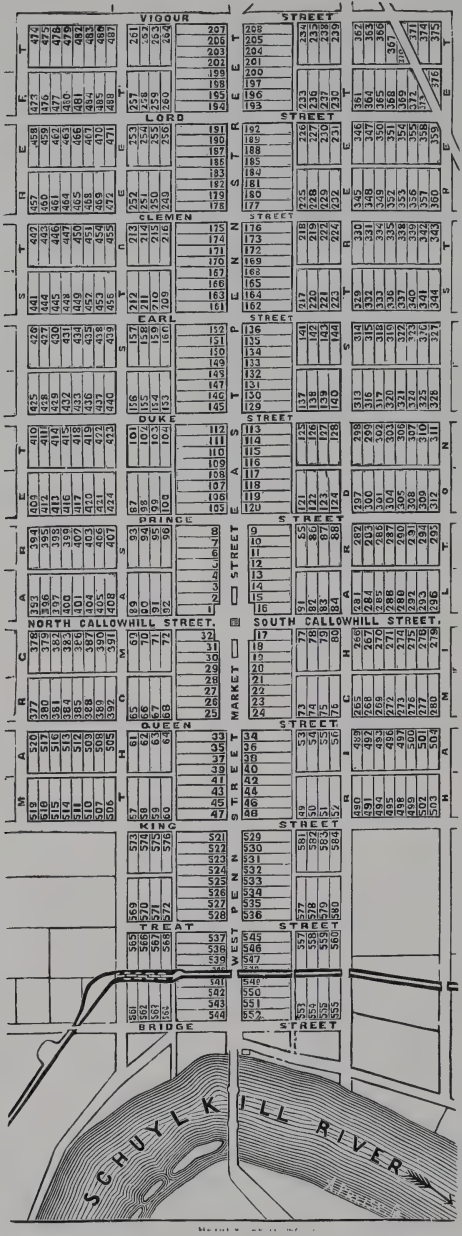

This Indenture

Patent for lot 420 enlarging cemetery. Issued by John Penn and John Penn, Jr., September 12, 1785.

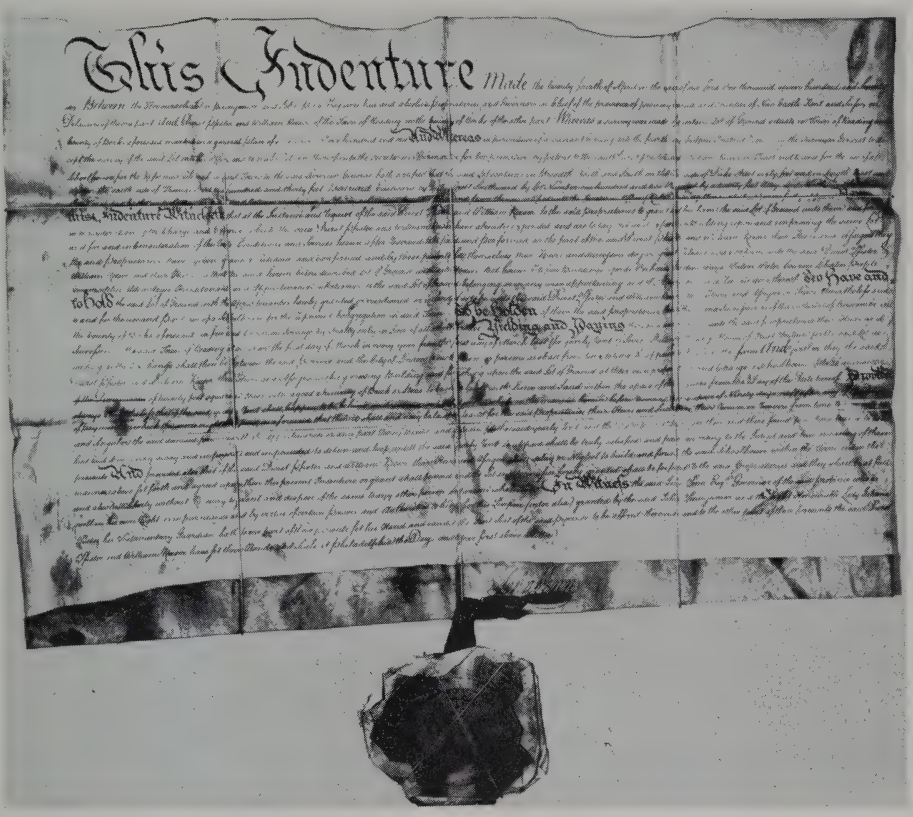
recorded in the Recorder's Office of Berks County under the various names by which the congregation was known. A summary of his findings follows. Lots numbered 421 and 424 were purchased from Conrad Weiser and Isaac Levan, March 5, 1759, for five Shillings. (Recorded in Deed Book A 2, page 114, Berks County.) These lots were originally obtained by Conrad Weiser and Isaac Levan, acting as trustees for the congregation, from Thomas and Richard Penn, Proprietaries of the Province of Pennsylvania, for five Shillings, and for the further consideration of seven Shillings "yearly rent." It is upon the Eastern portion of those lots that the church now stands at Reed and Washington Streets.

Lot number 101, was obtained April 24, 1776, from John Penn, Jr. and John Penn, Esquires, by Durst Pfister and William Reeser, in trust, for the Reformed Church for the purpose of building a

FIRST REFORMED CHURCH



PLAN OF LOTS AND STREETS IN READING


This Indenture Made

Patent for Lot 101 for purpose of building a schoolhouse. Issued April 24, 1776, by John Penn and John Penn, Jr.

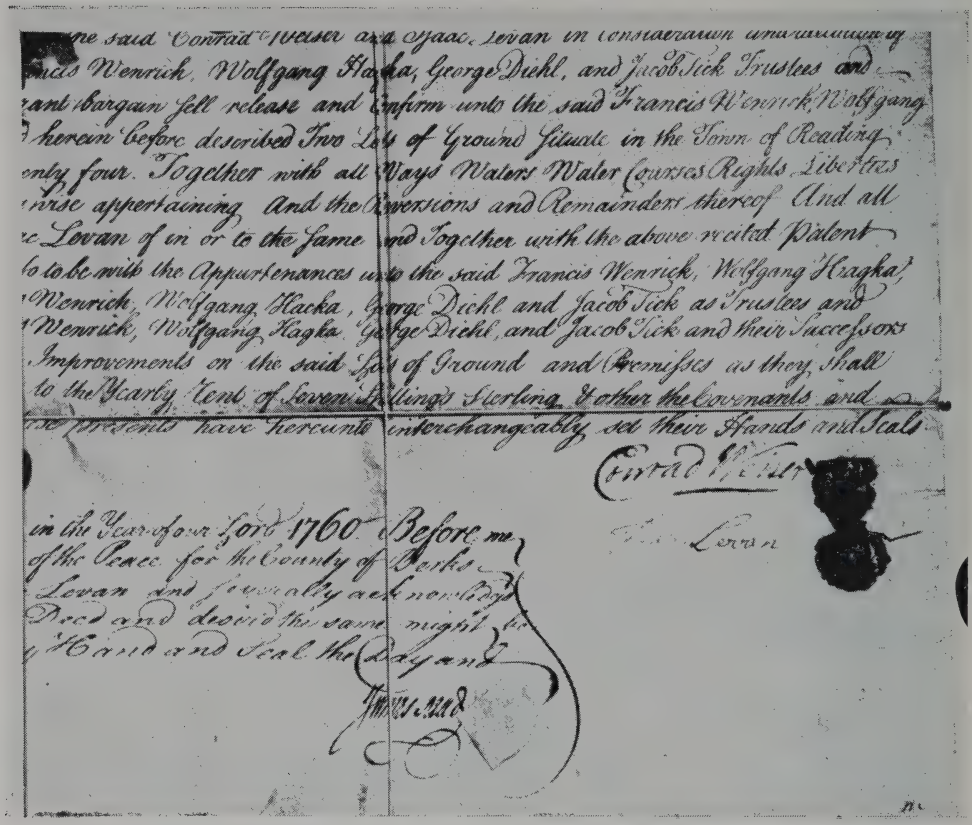
schoolhouse at the South West corner of Seventh and Washington Streets in consideration for seven Shillings yearly rent. The deed for this lot is recorded in Patent Book A A, Vol. 12, page 395, May 15, 1776, Philadelphia, Pa.

Hereinafter, the listing of Deed Books refers to Berks County, Pennsylvania.

Lot 420, purchased September 12, 1785, from John Penn and John Penn, Jr., for five Shillings. Recorded, Deed Book 9, page 85.

Lot 112, purchased May 31, 1785, from Conrad Foos and Catharine, his wife, for 500 Pounds. Deed Book, 9, page 15.

Lot 100, purchased February 16, 1793, from Samuel High,



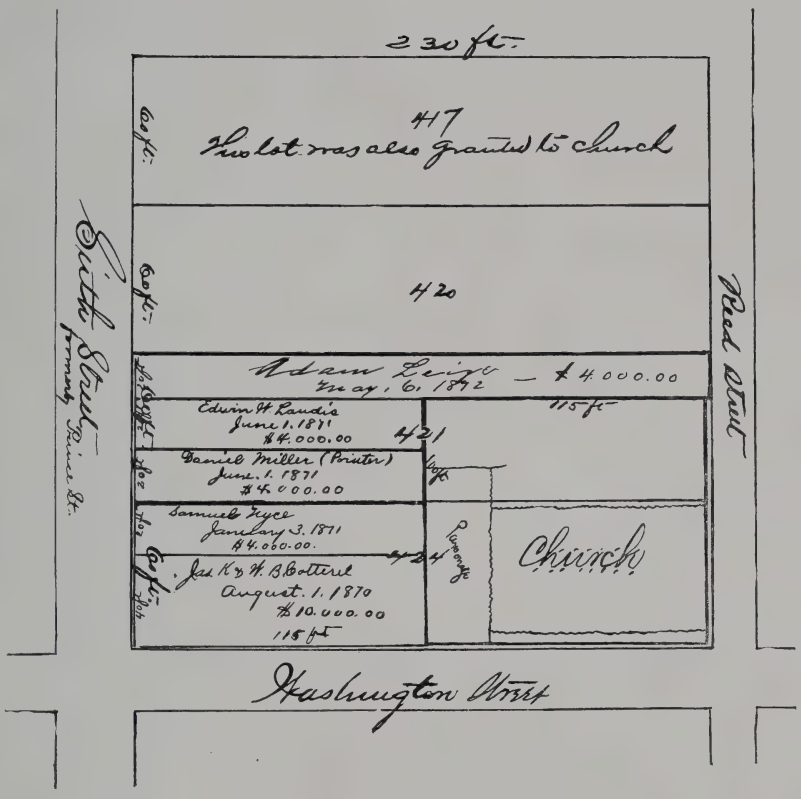
LOTS 421 AND 424 DEEDED TO CONGREGATION BY CONRAD WEISER AND ISAAC LEVAN.

Thomas Lightfoot and Samuel Jackson who agreed to sell to Nicholas Dick who in turn sold to "German Reformed Church Congregation." Consideration, 431 Pounds, "gold and silver." Deed Book 13, page 186. This is the lot on North Sixth Street where the Court House now stands.

Lot 416, purchased in 1803 from John Frey and Richard Miller. Consideration, twelve Pounds. Deed Book 76, page 260.

Lot 417, purchased from Adam Drinkhouse, December 13, 1811, for five Shillings. Deed Book 25, page 265.

Lot 409, purchased August 16, 1837, for $302.00. Deed Book 44, page 364.



LOCATION OF CHURCH, INDICATING ALSO SALE OF LOTS OUT OF LOTS 421 AND 424.

Lot 413, bought in 1844 from William Raiguel and his wife, Elizabeth, for $300.00. Deed Book 49, page 496.

Lot 412, purchased April 16, 1845, from George Bushar, Executor of Charles Bushar, deceased. Cost $400.00. Deed Book 50, page 329.

Lot and House at 1606 N. 15th Street (30 x 100 feet) was bought from Aulay P. Tompkins and Ruth E. Tompkins for a parsonage for $13,000.00. Deed recorded January 4, 1928. Deed Book 657, page 468.

A summary of the above enumerations of purchases means that at one time or other, First Reformed Church owned the full half-block between Washington and Walnut, and Reed and North Sixth Streets; also the South West corner of Seventh and Washington Streets; the North East corner of North Sixth and Court Streets; the North West corner of Penn and Seventh Streets; the lot and parsonage at 1606 North Fifteenth Street.

Lots in Charles Evans Cemetery. First German Reformed Church purchased lots, 70 to 73, in section D for $180.00. In the record at the Charles Evans cemetery office, it is stated that these lots were purchased "for the poor." It was at this time (1865) that the congregation had decided to organize another congregation and have it situated on land then occupied by the cemetery adjoining the church. This venture could not be made unless the bodies in the cemetery were transferred to another place. Hence, the purchase of the above named lots in the Charles Evans Cemetery. Families were privileged to have the remains of their relatives and friends moved to a place of their own selection. Where this was not done, the remains were exhumed and re-interred under the authority and supervision of the Consistory which had obtained the approval of the State Legislature. This work was not accomplished without some controversy and bitterness. On December 26, 1872, St. Paul's Memorial Reformed Church was formally organized. The word "Memorial" in the title of that congregation was used in honor and sacred memory of those persons who had been buried in the

cemetery adjoining the church. Lots were sold by First Reformed Church from the Cemetery Plot to the new congregation for building purposes for a consideration of "one dollar."

Governor Joseph Hiester, an elder in First Reformed Church, was buried in the cemetery at the church. His remains and those of other members of the Hiester family were re-interred in 1848 in Charles Evans Cemetery on the lot of John S. Hiester.

The Reverend Philip Reinhold Pauli was the only pastor buried in the church cemetery. His remains were re-interred on the lot of William J. Sellers in the year 1869 in Charles Evans Cemetery.

Charles Evans Cemetery lot 12, section "H" was purchased by the church on May 17, 1848. Deed Book 55, page 241. The minutes of the congregation, January 10, 1871, recorded an exchange of Lot 12 for Lots 138 and 139, Section "F."

The Cemetery Association donated to the church lots, numbered 138 and 139, Section "F" for the burial of pastors and their families. Mary A. Fundling is the only person buried on those lots.

OBVERSE

REVERSE

GREAT SEAL OF WILLIAM PENN

The Various Names of the Congregation

The various names by which the congregation was known make an interesting study. We have space here for a mere outline suggesting the influence of history under changing conditions.

The first name of the church, and the one used in the first patent of land was "Religious Society of Dutch Reformed Calvinists." This is not the name by which the congregation referred to itself. We believe the nomenclature in this title reveals the influence of the Quaker mind represented by the persons who drew up the Indentures and Patents for the transfer of land. The Germans would have used the word "congregation" and not the word "society." They would also have spoken of themselves as German Reformed and not as Dutch Reformed. The word "Dutch" as used in this first given name of the congregation was a translation of the word "deutsch" and does not refer to the Holland Dutch. It should have been properly translated "German." In support of our explanation, we report that in the Indenture by which the lots were conveyed to the congregation by the acting trustees, Conrad Weiser and Isaac Levan, it is stated that the land was "purchased for the site of a Meeting House." I believe we may assume correctly that the Germans would have used the designation "Church" for the building and not the Quaker words "Meeting House."

The word "Calvinists" in the first name of the congregation was due to the fact that John Calvin, more than any other man, was the organizing genius and theologian whom the Reformed people followed, even though Ulrich Zwingli shares equal honors with Calvin as one of the founders of the Reformed Church. Both here and abroad, Reformed people were referred to frequently as the "Calvinists," especially in the early years of the denomination.

The name most commonly used, in reference to what is now First Reformed Church, during the first hundred years corresponding to the period of German preaching was "The German Reformed Church." It was not until the year 1786 that the congregation was incorporated and the corporate name was "The Trustees, Elders and Deacons of the German Reformed Congregation in the Borough of Reading in the County of Berks."

An Act

For Incorporating the German Reformed Congregation in the Borough of Reading, in the County of Berks

Section 1. Whereas divers members of the German Reformed Congregation in the Borough of Reading, in the County of Berks, have at a very considerable expense erected one church and one schoolhouse in the said borough, have prayed that some persons amongst them may be incorporated for the community, that they may receive and hold grants of lands and chattels, thereby to enable the petitioners to erect and repair public buildings for the worship of God, for school houses and for the maintenance of the ministry, and that the same as trustees, elders and deacons may plead and be impleaded in any suit touching the premises, and have perpetual succession. And whereas it is just and right and also agreeable to the spirit of the Constitution that the prayer of their said petition be granted.

Section 2. Be it therefore enacted, and it is hereby enacted, by the representatives of the freemen of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania in General Assembly met and by the authority of the same that Daniel Hiester, Daniel Levan and Joseph Hiester, trustees; John Hartman, Kraft Heiner, Jacob Yeager, George Reihm, Daniel Zacharias and Philip Miller, elders; Peter Nagle, John Snell, Geo. Yeager, Daniel Rose, Conrad Fesig and Peter Feather, the younger, deacons of the German Reformed church or congregation above named, in the county aforesaid, and their successors duly elected and nominated in their place and stead, be and are hereby made and constituted a corporation and body politic in law and in fact to have continuance forever by the name, style and title of "The Trustees, Elders and Deacons of the German Reformed Congregation in the Borough of Reading in the County of Berks."

Section 3. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that the said corporation and their successors by the name, style and title aforesaid, shall, forever hereafter, be persons able and capable in law to purchase, take,

hold and enjoy any messuages, houses, buildings, lands, rents, tenements, annuities, or any other hereditaments in fee simple, and forever or for term of life or lives, or in any other manner, so as the same exceed not at any time the clear yearly value or income of the sum of one thousand pounds lawful money of Pennsylvania, to be taken and esteemed exclusive of the monies arising from the letting of the pews and the contributions belonging to said church, and also exclusive of the monies arising from the opening of the ground or burials; and further, that the said corporation may take and receive any sum or sums of money, or any manner or portion of goods and chattels that shall be given or bequeathed to them by any person or persons, bodies politic or corporate, capable to make a bequest or gift thereof; and also that the said corporation and their successors shall and may give, grant, demise or otherwise dispose of all or any of the messuages, houses, buildings, lands, rents, tenements, annuities or any other hereditaments as to them shall seem meet (excepting the site of the house of public worship, burial ground or grounds, parsonage, house or houses, schoolhouse or houses), for repairing or re-building the house of public worship, parsonage, house or schoolhouse aforementioned, and not otherwise.

Section 4. Provided always, and be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that in the making sale or disposition of any part or parcel of the real estate of the said corporation, the consent and concurrence of the major part of the regular members who shall have been enrolled as stated worshippers with the said church for not less than the space of one year shall be had and obtained.

Section 5. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that all and every such lands, tenements, hereditaments, money, goods and chattels which at any time before or after the passing of this Act have been or shall be devised, given or granted to the church above named in the said town (now borough) of Reading, or to any person or persons in trust for them, shall be and remain, and they are hereby declared to be vested in and shall remain in the peaceable and quiet possession of the corporation according to the true intent and meaning of such devise or devises, gift or gifts, grant or grants.

Section 6. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that the said corporation and their successors by the name of "The Trustees, Elders and Deacons of the German Reformed Congregation in the Borough of Reading, in the County of Berks," shall be able and capable in law to sue and be sued, plead and be impleaded in any court or courts, before any judge or judges, justice or justices in all and all manner of suits, complaints,

causes, matters and demands of whatsoever kind, nature and form they may be, in as full and effectual a manner as any other person or persons, bodies politic and corporate in this Commonwealth may or can do.

Section 7. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that the said corporation and their successors shall have full power and authority to make, have and use one common seal, with such devise or devises and inscription as they shall think proper, and the same to break, alter and renew at their pleasure.

Section 8. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that the said trustees, elders and deacons and their successors or a majority of them, with the concurrence of their pastor or minister for the time being, be authorized and empowered from time to time to make rules, by-laws and ordinances, and to do everything needful for the good government and support of the secular affairs of said church, provided always that the said rules, by-laws and ordinances, or any of them, be consonant to the usages and customs of said church and not repugnant to the laws of this commonwealth.

Section 9. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that the said corporation shall consist of sixteen members, namely, the pastor or minister for the time being, "three trustees, six elders and six deacons called and known by the name of the trustees, elders and deacons of the German Reformed congregation in the borough of Reading, in the county of Berks," and who shall be chosen by a majority of such members of said congregation as have a right to vote therein, according to the enrollment as stated worshippers, as above mentioned.

Section 10. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid that the said Daniel Hiester, Daniel Levan and Joseph Hiester, the first and present trustees; John Hartman, Kraft Heiner, Jacob Yeager, George Reihm, Daniel Zacharias and Philip Miller, the present elders; Peter Nagle, John Snell, George Yeager, Daniel Rose, Conrad Feasig and Peter Feather the younger, the present deacons, hereby incorporated, shall be and continue as aforesaid until they be removed in manner following, that is to say, one-third part in number of each of them shall cease and discontinue and their appointment determine on the first Monday in the month of January, which will be in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-seven, upon which day a new election shall be had and held for so many others in their stead and place, by a majority met and qualified agreeable to the purport, true intent and meaning of this act, to vote and elect as aforesaid. And on the first Monday in the month of January in the year following, the second third part in number of each of the said trustees, elders and deacons herein

named, shall in like manner cease and discontinue and their appointment determine, and a new election to be had and held of so many others in their place and stead, and in like manner on the first Monday in the month of January, in the year then next following, the last third part of each of the said trustees, elders and deacons shall in like manner cease and discontinue and their appointment determine, and a new election be had and held in like manner, and by the like mode of rotation, one-third part in number of said trustees, elders and deacons shall cease and discontinue, and their appointment determine, and a new election of said appointment be had and held in manner aforesaid on the first Monday in the month of January in each and every year forever, so that no person or persons shall be or continue a trustee, elder or deacon of said church for any longer time than three years together, if not re-elected.

Section 11. And be it further enacted by the authority aforesaid, that in case of death or a removal of the pastor or minister of said congregation, and until another pastor or minister shall be duly appointed and approved for said congregation, agreeable to former method and usage, they, the said trustees, elders and deacons, shall have the same powers and authorities as are herein vested in the whole corporation, or in case of death, refusal or removal of one or more of the trustees, elders or deacons the said corporation shall at any time, whenever the same shall happen, have power to elect, appoint and choose any other trustee or trustees, elder or elders, deacon or deacons, as the case may be, and the person or persons so nominated and appointed to continue in said office for and during the time the person or persons, he or they were elected for, should or could have remained and continued, and no longer.

Section 12. Provided, always, that the persons belonging to said church who are in and by this Act authorized and empowered to elect, shall and may be at liberty to re-elect one or more of said trustees, elders and deacons whose time shall have expired on the day of the annual election whenever and so often as they shall think fit.

Signed by order of the House.
THOMAS MIFFLIN, *Speaker.*

Enacted into a law at Philadelphia, on Friday, the twenty-fifth day of August in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and eighty-six.

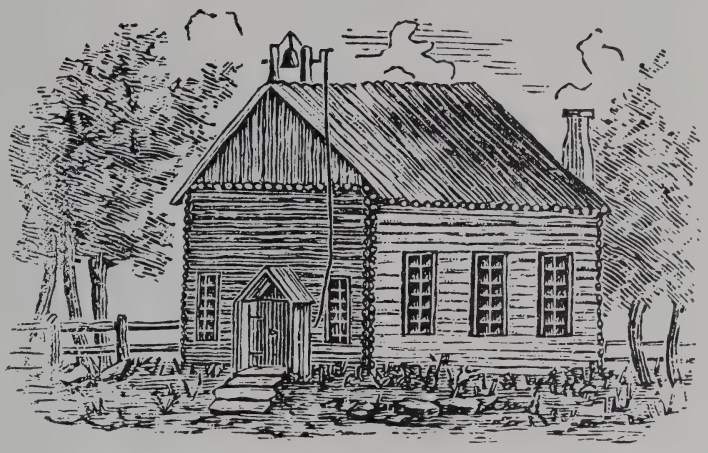
SAMUEL BRYAN,
Clerk of the General Assembly.

Enrolled November 8, 1786.

FIRST REFORMED CHURCH

After the organization of Second Reformed Church in 1848, the congregation was generally referred to as the First German Reformed Church and it was not until the discontinuance of German preaching in 1891, that the name First Reformed Church was in common use. From 1786 to 1931, the corporate title of the congregation was "The Trustees, Elders and Deacons of the German Reformed Congregation in the Borough of Reading in the County of Berks." On October 26, 1931, during the present pastorate, the corporate name of the congregation was changed to "First Reformed Church of Reading, Pennsylvania" and the charter accordingly amended. This is still the corporate name of the congregation even though the denomination of which the congregation is an official part is known as "the Evangelical and Reformed Church" as a result of a merger of the Reformed Church in the United States with the Evangelical Synod of North America on June 26, 1934. The reason the corporate name of the congregation has not been changed is because soon after the above mentioned merger we entered into merger conversations with the Congregational Christian Churches. Had that merger been consummated, another change of name and charter amendment would have been required. At this writing, the merger conversations continue.

Our Church Buildings



The first church building, a log structure, erected 1753–1755. The Charity School was organized in this building on March 5, 1755, by the Rev. Michael Schlatter. Charity Schools were established in York, Easton, Lancaster, Hanover and Skippack. They were of short duration. The Charity School in the Log Church was continued by the congregation as a parochial school for about ninety-five to one hundred years.

The first church building was a log structure. Prof. I. Daniel Rupp in his "History of Berks and Lebanon Counties," page 167, makes the following statement, "The German Reformed erected a building in 1753. In 1761, the first building, which was of logs, was taken down and a stone one built." Mr. Rupp has been regarded a reliable historian but in the case of the date of erection of the log church, there have been other dates mentioned by historical writers. Since the matter rests in obscurity, we suggest the erection of the log church between the years 1753 and 1755.

The second structure was built of stone between the years 1761 and 1764. It was built at a time when the congregation had no pastor. This was a laudable undertaking by the congregation. The building was splendidly furnished with an organ and an altar and also a wine glass type pulpit with sounding board overhead. The

THE SECOND CHURCH EDIFICE, A STONE STRUCTURE.
Erected in 1761.
The Stone Church was used as a hospital for a period of time during the Revolutionary War, ministering to the welfare of sick and wounded soldiers.

furnishings were hand-carved walnut. The contents of the corner-stone were a bible, a silver and copper coin and a lead plate, eight inches square. On the lead plate there was impressed a diagram of the two lots of land upon which the church stands. From the external angles of the diagram, lines were drawn to the four corners of the plate. The areas thus delineated were marked North, South, East and West, and contained the following inscriptions:

North: "To the High German Reformed Congregation of Reading, in Berks County, and privileged to build a church thereon, and for the interment of the dead for us and our descendants."

South: "The corner-stone was laid 27th, July, in the presence of the congregation. A Bible, and the coin in silver and copper of our King of Great Britain, France and Ireland, were deposited, A.D. 1761."

East: "The Patent was recorded in Land-Office, Philadelphia, Book A, folio 17, P. 504, 16 Aug. 1754."

West: "These two lots of ground were sold by Thomas Penn and Richard Penn, veritable proprietors of the province of Pennsylvania, 20 May, 1754."

The reverse side of the plate bore this inscription: "Conrad Weiser and Isaac Levan, trustees of the congregation in Patent; and Architects are M. W. Resser, Abr. Kerper and W. Miller, who are also Wardens of the Congregation."

The first sermon preached in the stone church was by the Rev. John George Alsentz of Germantown, Pa. This fact is stated on the back of the deed in our possession given for the lots upon which the church stands, and reads as follows: "May 13, 1764. The first sermon was preached in the new church on the within mentioned lots by George Alsentz, minister of the gospel."

The stone church was razed in 1831 during the pastorate of Rev. William Pauli and the third church erected.

The third church edifice was of brick, fifty-five by seventy-five feet in dimension with a steeple one hundred and fifty-one feet in height and housing two bells, one of which had been in the steeple of the stone church. The brick building, erected in 1831-1832, was not dedicated until April 21, 1833. The contents of the corner-stone of the stone church were placed in the corner-stone of the new brick church except that a new Bible was provided and additional items of currency and a "Proclamation" were added. The Proclamation read as follows:

"At the laying of the corner-stone of the High German Reformed Church in the town of Reading, Berks County, State of Pennsylvania, in North America.

"Whereas the congregation of the High German Reformed Church in the town of Reading has resolved to erect a new, larger and more commodious church than the old one, therefore we declare herewith and make known to posterity that we love the Christian religion above everything and value it highly, and that it

THE BRICK CHURCH, ERECTED 1831–1832.

is our wish and prayer that it may be preached in its purity to our latest posterity; that it shall be and remain a High German Reformed Church; and for this purpose we in the name of the Triune God lay the corner-stone for said church."

"Done in the year of our Lord 1832, on June 3, under the government of A. Jackson, President of the United States, and the governor of the State of Pennsylvania, Mr. Wolf."

The building committee consisted of Nicholas Lotz, Baltzer Smith, Daniel Fasig, John Y. Cunnius, Abraham Kerper and John Miller.

The Brick Church of 1831–1832, but lengthened by sixteen feet at East end, bringing wall almost flush with the tower; having also a steeple heightened to about 190 feet and a parsonage built against West wall.

The entrances were on the south and west sides. The pulpit with sounding board above it was on the north side. There were galleries on three sides.

The main walls of the building of 1831 are the walls of the present edifice, 1953.

The building of 1831-1832 has undergone several major renovations.

In 1840, during the pastorate of Rev. Wm. Pauli, the cellar was excavated to provide a basement room for the accommodation of the Sunday School. Though it was a dismal room, it served the school for ten years.

The Brick Church, showing appearance of West end, also the fence. Fences enclosed the church property until 1890.

In 1849, under the pastorate of Rev. Aaron S. Leinbach, extensive renovations were made. The first floor was lowered and a spacious room provided accommodations above ground level for the Sunday School. The entrance at the west end of the church was closed and the pulpit removed to that end of the building from the north wall. The building was lengthened sixteen feet at the eastern end bringing it almost flush with the tower and providing our present spacious corridors. The galleries were reconstructed and other interior reno-

The Nave, before a part of the organ was installed in the front of the church and before electric lights were installed. As it appeared after remodeling of 1875.

THE NAVE, LOOKING TOWARD THE REAR.

vations made. The building committee was constituted as follows: Philip Fisher, Daniel Weitzel, John F. Moers, John Geily, and William Call. The church was re-dedicated on March 3, 1850. The Rev. Thomas H. Leinbach, father of pastor A. S. Leinbach, preached in the German language at the morning service. The Rev. Henry Harbaugh preached in English in the afternoon.

In 1874-1875, during the pastorate of Rev. Henry Mosser, the interior of the church was again extensively remodeled. Only the walls and roof of the building were retained. New galleries, windows, pews and pulpit were installed. The ceiling was altered and new lights introduced. The old steeple of 151 feet in height was replaced by the present (1953) steeple of 190 feet in height. The fine chairs and settee in the chancel and pulpit were the work of J. R. Ritter and Company. The cost of the project was more than $41,000 or almost twice the estimate. The resulting debt of $22,000 became a heavy burden upon pastor and people. Upon the liquidation of same the pastor said appropriately, "Gott Sei Dank." That building committee consisted of George J. Eckert, F. S. Bernhart, Solomon Sprecher, Amos L. Dick and Samuel Klopp. The dedication took place on Sunday, May 2, 1875.

In 1909 renovations were made under the pastorate of Rev. John F. Moyer. The chief items were a new stairway, re-frescoing and new lights. It was at this time that the large, beautiful chandelier was removed and eight electric units installed in the form of clusters of five lights each. Prior to this installation, gas was used. At a later date, a new carpet was laid.

In 1928-1929, during the pastorate of Rev. Daniel J. Wetzel, a remodeling project was undertaken to provide more adequate facilities for the Church School and for the social life of the congregation. The parsonage adjoining the church was converted into Church School Rooms and the Church Office. A new parsonage was purchased at 1606 N. Fifteenth Street. By excavating under the Sunday School room, a fine social and dining room was obtained. The reconstruction provided seven Church School Rooms instead of

THE NAVE AFTER INSTALLATION OF ELECTRIC LIGHTS, 1909.

the former two. The total cost was $71,000. Services of dedication were held from Sunday, June 2, to Tuesday, June 4, 1929. The speakers were Dr. Theodore F. Herman, Professor of Systematic Theology in the Seminary at Lancaster, Pa., and Rev. A. N. Sayers, Pastor of St. John's Reformed Church, Lansdale, Pa. On the evening of June 4th, the play, "The Terrible Meek" by Charles Rann Kennedy was presented by the Dramatic League of Second Presbyterian Church, Pottsville, Pa., the Rev. Raymond Chester Walker, pastor. Excellent presentation!

This play was an important part of our dedication program because we had for the first time in the long history of the congregation platform and other facilities for dramatic presentations. Annually, since 1929, our young people have presented one or two plays.

In this same year, November 1929, came the financial depression which hit the country with real shock. Banks were closed in 1930 by order of the President of the United States and there was unemployment and hardship for a number of years. With an obligation of $33,000.00, we had our work "cut out" for us. We met our interest regularly and paid our debt.

In this connection, with special reference to financial obligations by congregations, we quote from Dr. Henry Ranck's, "The Life of the Reverend Benjamin Bausman, D.D.," at page 340, where he says, "Had a special meeting of the Consistory after church this P. M. The most members wish to let our bonds in the Savings Bank be sold at auction, possibly to the loss of depositors. I protested against it. Felt so much wounded that it threw me into a kind of tremor. Withdrew before adjournment. *Oh my God, save us from doing this wrong!* He said to one of his members regarding the same matter, 'I'll be pastor of no fifty cent church. Dollar for dollar. I'll rather pay the entire $5,000.00 myself.' " Had Dr. Bausman lived amongst us during our financial depression of 1929 and following years, he might have provided some congregations the inspiration to a high sense of honor in meeting their obligations.

A "Note Burning Service" was held on June 27, 1943, celebrating our final payment of the debt. The Committee on our Remodeling Project was John J. Knoll, Chairman, Selos R. Barnet, Harvey H. Shomo, Paul D. Kauffman and the Pastor, member Ex-Officio. Mr. Selos R. Barnet served as Treasurer of the Remodeling Fund until May 6, 1929. He was succeeded by Mr. Harry Dunkelberger who served until the debt was paid. The contractor for the work was Mr. Charles H. Schlegel, a member of the congregation.

In 1951, under the pastorate of Rev. Daniel J. Wetzel, a program of renovation was begun for the purpose of beautifying and making more worshipful the interior of the church. The church was re-wired. New lights, pew cushions, carpet, hearing aids and amplification were installed. The walls and all furniture and woodwork were cleansed. The corridors were painted and appropriate floor

THE NAVE, 1953, SHOWING NEW LIGHTS.

coverings laid. A new pavement was laid and foundation plantings and trees set out. The total cost was $38,000.

This work, though highly necessary, was a part of the program looking toward the celebration of the 200th Anniversary of the congregation in 1953.

The Committee on Renovations was Robert L. Auchenbach, Chairman, Chester H. Forry, Paul E. Sausser, Francis H. Mills, Herbert L. Parsons, Harry K. Hammond and J. Franklin Schaeffer.

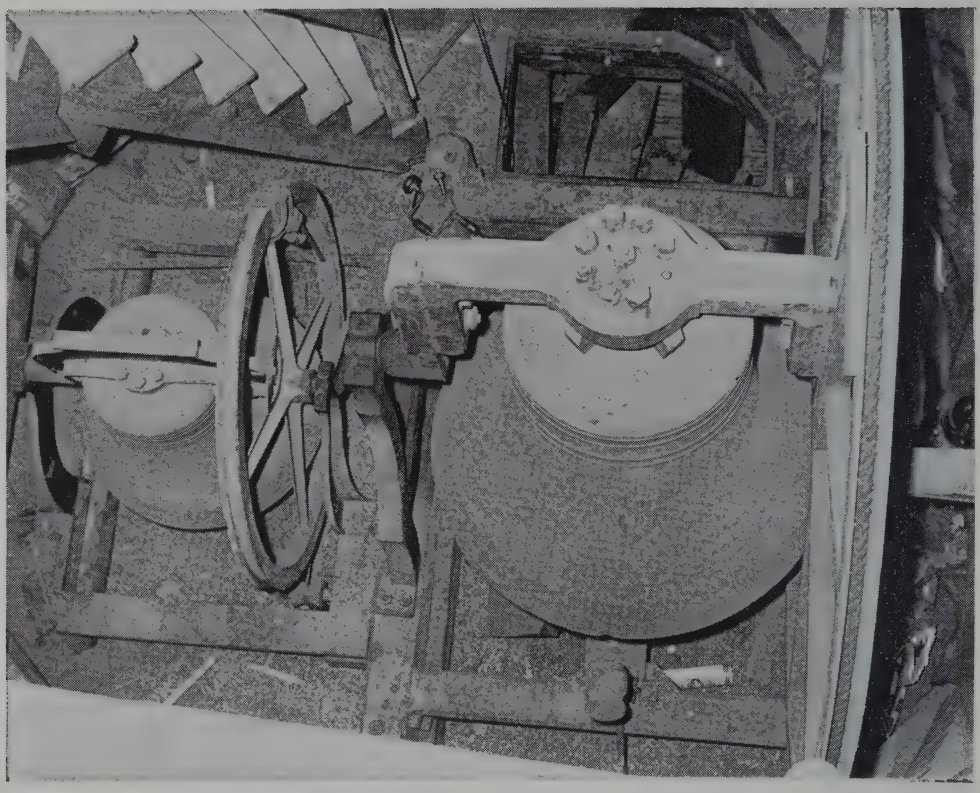
The Committee on Financial Campaign was William B. McCabe, Chairman, Francis H. Mills, J. Franklin Schaeffer, William R. Forry, Chester H. Forry, Irvin H. Reinert, Irwin J. Bright, Chester Blankenbiller.

The Brick Church as you see it today (1953), showing new side walk, foundation plantings, new Pin Oak trees, and new Bulletin Board.

The Committee on the 200th Anniversary History of the Church and the Program were as follows: Chairman, John W. Forry, Charles K. Snell, Robert E. Delp, Irvin H. Reinert, J. Wendell Coblentz, Harry Dunkelberger, William N. Kline, Robert L. Auchenbach, Irwin J. Bright, and Dr. D. J. Wetzel, Ex-Officio.

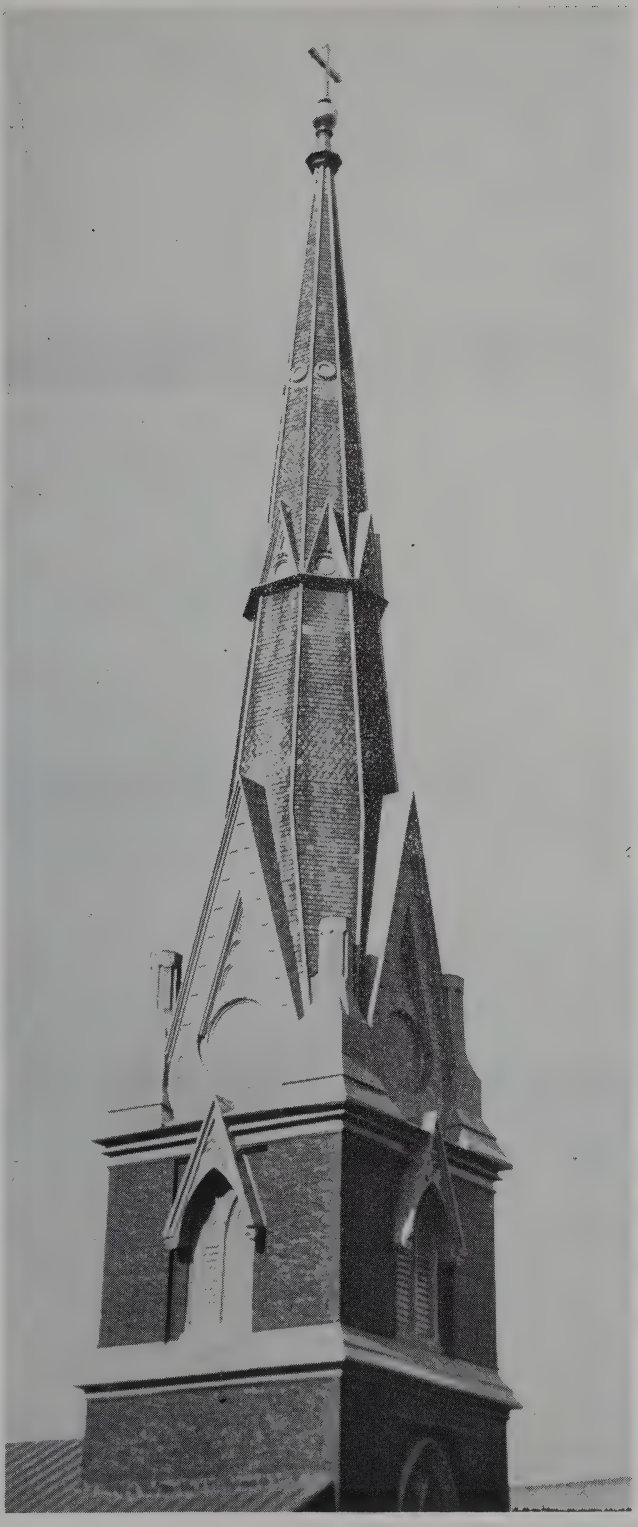
THE CROSS *and* BALL

The upright of the Cross measures 8½ feet; the Cross arm 5½ feet. The ball is 36 inches in diameter. They were taken down and gold-leafed in October, 1945. Bullet holes from high-powered rifles were evident in the Ball.



THE BELLS

In the early years, the bell was rung for Consistory meetings and on the occasion of the death of a member, tolling the age. Rung also on the day of a funeral which was usually held in the church. The smaller bell may have been in the Stone Church.



THE SPIRE AS OF DATE, 1953
Last repaired in October, 1945, by James A. Mahoney and Frank Gerliep, excellent workmen. Cost was $996.00.

THE SOCIAL AND DINING ROOM, CONSTRUCTED IN 1929.

THE DOORWAY, SHOWING NEW EXTERIOR LANTERN.

1753
1761
FIRST
REFORMED
CHURCH
HISTORICAL
WINDOW
1831
1874

Education

The matter of the education of the children of the members of First Reformed Church from its beginning to date is a very interesting chapter in the history of the congregation.

There is ample evidence that the earliest German immigrants were concerned about the secular and religious education of their children. Historians testify to this truth and later records verify their claims. The educational program in First Reformed Church was begun two years after the organization of the congregation. It was part of the movement inaugurated by Rev. Michael Schlatter as superintendent of the Charity Schools sponsored by an organization in London known as "The Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge Among the Germans in Pennsylvania." I believe we have found about as many different names for this organization as the number of books we have read referring to the subject.

Briefly, let us report on the work of Michael Schlatter and the establishment of the Charity Schools in Pennsylvania among the Reformed people.

Schlatter arrived on our shores in 1746. He was sent here by the synods of Holland to organize the Reformed people into congregations and the congregations into charges. It was a work of gathering together the scattered and shepherdless people. He soon discovered the need for pastors and leadership. He did a remarkable piece of work from 1746 to 1751, traveling over 8,000 miles, chiefly on horse-back, organizing forty-six congregations and sixteen charges. He also organized the Coetus in 1747 with four ministers attending.

In 1751, the Coetus sent the Rev. Mr. Schlatter to Europe to report conditions and to enlist the interest of the people there with the idea in mind of obtaining financial support for the work over

REV. MICHAEL SCHLATTER
Organizer and Superintendent of the
Charity Schools

here. The word, "Coetus," derived from the Latin, meant a coming together or a convention. He was also interested in securing pastors who would come here to minister to these people. He achieved significant results. Interest was aroused in Holland, England and Germany. Financial support was obtained. Six ministers volunteered to serve in these parts and accompanied Schlatter on his return in 1752. Those pastors were Otterbein, Stoy, Waldschmid, who later served First Reformed congregation, and Frankenfeld, Wissler and Rubel.

Another important result of Schlatter's visit to Europe was the organization of the "Society for the Propagation of the Gospel Among the Germans in Pennsylvania." The organization was

formed in London with fifteen prominent citizens as its directors and the Earl of Shaftesbury as president. The real objective of the Society was the establishment of schools for the children, especially in the Pennsylvania area. England and Scotland raised about $20,000 for this work, King George II, personally, contributing $5,000. The following trustees were appointed in Pennsylvania to supervise the work: namely, James Hamilton, Governor; William Allen; Richard Peters; Benjamin Franklin; Conrad Weiser; and William Smith, President of Pennsylvania College, later to become the University of Pennsylvania. This was a notable group of men, indeed. The Rev. Mr. Schlatter was elected superintendent of schools, charged with their organization and supervision. He accepted the position and resigned as Commissioner of the Holland Synods on May 14, 1754.

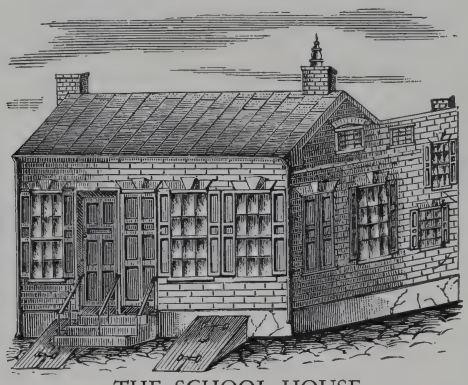
The schools were, of course, interdenominational. The work had an auspicious beginning and the promise of excellent results.

On March 5, 1755, the Rev. Mr. Schlatter opened the charity school in Reading with a supporting board of local trustees on which were named, besides Quakers, Lutherans and Presbyterians, two Calvinists; namely, Isaac Levan and Samuel High. Though the place of its sessions is not indicated, it is assumed that they were held in the log church erected by the Reformed congregation and later continued in the stone structure, erected in 1761.

The charity schools were of short duration. The year 1759 is the last year reported that a contribution was made toward the salary of the schoolmaster. We can take but a moment to enumerate a few of the leading causes for the brevity of this English-sponsored educational movement.

The English had made some derogatory remarks about the Germans, regarding them as "barbarous and factious and unprincipled." These accusations were deeply resented. The English also pressed the matter of instruction in the English language. This, too, was not well received. The Germans did not wish to be made Englishmen. It was also true that the English feared the Germans would make common cause with the French or rebel with the

Indians. Rapid colonization of the Germans appeared the strategy of the English and the Germans resented the schools as representing a political motive. Christopher Saur, well-known German printer in Germantown, attacked the schools in his press. His reasons may have been selfish, since English schools militated against his business interests. Further resentment was aroused amongst the Germans because on a number of boards of local trustees, there was no Reformed representation but chiefly Quakers, Moravians, Separatists and others. For these reasons chiefly, the charity schools failed within a period of less than ten years.



THE SCHOOL HOUSE
The lot for the School House was obtained from the Penns on April 24, 1776, and the building erected the same year. The structure stood until 1892.

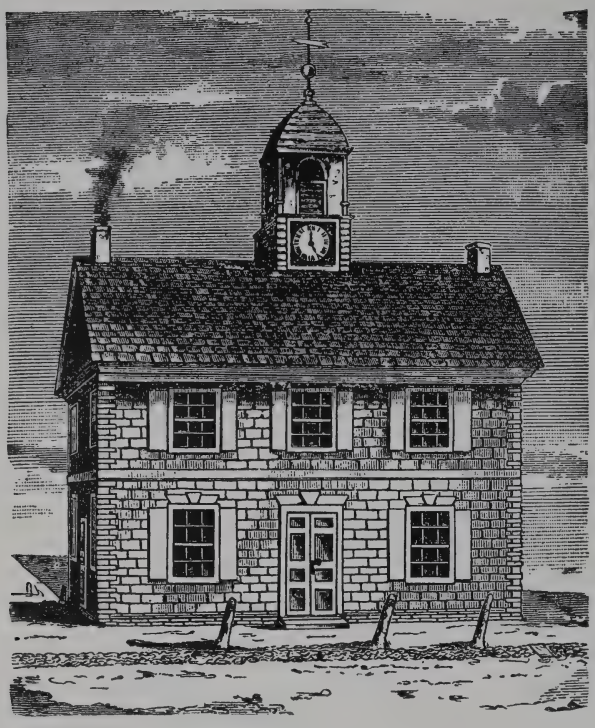
However, the schools were not closed. It was at this point that First Reformed Church, like some other congregations, took upon itself the support and management of the school and continued it as a parochial school. For its continuance, a lot was purchased from the Penns. On April 24, 1776, John Penn, and his son John Penn, Jr., conveyed lot No. 101 at the Southwest corner of Seventh and Washington Streets "to Durst Pfister and William Reeser in trust for the Reformed Congregation" for the express purpose of erecting a schoolhouse. A double brick structure was erected the same year. One-half of the building was used as a dwelling for the schoolmaster and the other half as the schoolroom. The school was in

continuous operation for a period of about 95 years. On November 22, 1847, the Consistory resolved to sell the property. This resolution was consummated by a sale on April 5, 1850, to George Foos for $1,006. The building stood until 1892. Teachers in the school were Philip Jacob Fäsig, John Roland, who taught fifty or more years, and Benjamin Schneck. Mr. Schneck, the schoolmaster, was the father of the Rev. Benjamin S. Schneck, D.D., well-known pastor in the Reformed Church. The minutes of the Consistory, February 7, 1809, report the annual salary of Mr. Roland, the teacher, as £16, eight cords of wood and the use of the lot on the graveyard. In the school were taught Reading, Spelling, Writing, Arithmetic and Religion, especially the Heidelberg Catechism. We have also seen the statement that sewing was taught the girls.

Thus far we have considered the origin of the Charity School and the Parochial School.

A third step in education now enters the picture in the form of Christian Education. It was the organization of a Sunday School in 1819 on an interdenominational basis. The school met in the court house which was erected in 1762 and located at the intersection of Fifth and Penn Streets. It was supported chiefly by the Reformed, Lutheran and Presbyterian denominations. At its inception the school numbered about 300 pupils, six of them being colored. Memory work was emphasized. Bible verses, hymns and answers to the questions in the catechisms were committed to memory. The union school continued until 1840. During the period of the Union Sunday School, the parochial school was continued which, of course, met five days a week.

The fourth step in the field of education was commenced in 1840 when the First Reformed Congregation provided a basement room for the accommodation of its own Sunday School. The Sunday School work has continued unbroken since 1840 with but six superintendents for this period of 113 years. We have today a fully departmentalized school with separate rooms for our departments and a corps of 65 officers and teachers.



THE COURT HOUSE

This, the first Court House stood at the intersection of Fifth and Penn Streets. It housed the interdenominational Sunday School from 1819 to 1840.

The following persons have served as superintendent of the Sunday School:

Augustus F. Boas	1840–1877	Levi R. Snyder	1886–1892
Tobias Barlet	1877–1879	Selos R. Barnet	1892–1945
John B. Renninger	1879–1886	William N. Kline	1945–

In connection with the Sunday School movement in general, we wish to emphasize that it was not an entirely popular venture. The opposition came chiefly from certain clergymen who feared the lay teachers were not qualified to give the desired instruction and that they were not grounded in the theological tenets of their respective denominations. We understand the validity of this apprehension.

THE NURSERY ROOM (1953).

We need to recall that there was no Sunday School literature at hand in that day. Furthermore, with respect to the chronological steps of this movement in Reading, we are not able to write with assured accuracy. It appears, indeed, that the Union Sunday School movement established in the Court House in 1819, did not continue without some interruption and difficulty. To clarify this point, we quote from a reliable historian, the Reverend Jacob Fry, D.D., Pastor of Trinity Lutheran Church, Reading, 1865 to 1875, as he writes in his "History of Trinity Lutheran Church, Reading, Pa.," "One of the last acts of Mr. Muhlenberg while pastor of the congregation, was the organization of the Sunday School. A union

THE KINDERGARTEN ROOM, 1953.

Sunday School of all denominations had existed for some years previously, and was held in the Old Academy, at Seventh and Chestnut Streets. Rev. Dr. Richards, who was a child of this congregation and studied theology with Pastor Muhlenberg, states in his diary that "the Lutherans and Reformed withdrew from that union school, and organized a separate school on April 5, 1829. This school was held at first in Major Medary's schoolroom, northwest corner of Fifth and Cherry Streets. On the third Sunday it was removed to Trinity Church, and numbered 250 scholars. The school occupied the spacious galleries of the church. It was organized by Mr. Muhlenberg just one month before the close of his pastorate." "After a few Sundays, this Lutheran and Reformed school was transferred to the Court House."

THE PRIMARY ROOM, 1953.

THE JUNIOR ROOM, 1953.

THE JUNIOR AND SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL ROOM, 1953.

THE AUDITORIUM OF THE CHURCH SCHOOL, HOUSING THE WOMEN'S CLASSES AND THE YOUNG PEOPLE'S DEPARTMENT, 1953.

THE MEN'S BIBLE CLASS ROOM, 1953.

Local Missionary Enterprise

First Reformed Church is the oldest Reformed Church in the city and was the only church of our denomination in Reading for a period of ninety-five years. We believe that the congregation can lay a rightful claim upon the title "fostering mother" in her relationship to the congregations which were organized from time to time. Prior to 1871, there were two Reformed churches in Reading; namely, First Reformed, founded in 1753 and Second Reformed, established in 1848.

Between the years 1871 and 1897, a period of only twenty-six years, the following twelve congregations were organized. We list them in the chronological order of their organization.

St. John's	1871	St. Andrew's	1891
St. Paul's	1872	St. Mark's	1891
Zion's	1881	Faith	1892
St. Stephen's	1884	St. James	1893
St. Thomas	1890	(West Reading)	
Olivet	1890	Trinity	1897
Calvary	1890	(Mt. Penn)	

Two factors contributed largely to this rapid growth and development of the Reformed Church in Reading and immediate vicinity. They were, first, the rapid growth of the population which advanced from 34,000 in 1870 to 79,000 in 1900 or approximately the same period in which the churches made such remarkable growth. The second factor, and the one we consider the more influential, was Dr. Benjamin Bausman. Dr. Bausman was certainly the leading spirit in the organization of new congregations, though it must be said that Dr. Henry Mosser, Pastor of First Church, and Dr. Charles F. McCauley, Pastor of Second Church, and a small group of lay-

men worked hand in hand with Dr. Bausman in that notable home missionary project.

Dr. Bausman led this missionary movement not only in spirit and prayer but by his personal example of generosity. A few of the laymen who worked with him and contributed generously of money and service were J. B. Fricker, G. A. Leinbach, W. H. Dechant, James Rick and Joseph A. Leinbach.

First Reformed Church made some contribution to nearly all the congregations that were organized in that period of Reformed Church expansion. In a number of cases, First Church sent to these new organizations leaders from her membership to help direct the work of the Sunday Schools and congregations. For several of the new Sunday Schools, First Church supplied the literature for periods of five to ten years. For some schools she provided the furniture. In two instances at least she donated the building lots. In one instance she contributed $30,000.00, the land upon which the new church was built and dismissed to the newly organized congregation one hundred and ninety-eight members.

The present financial records of the congregation show that First Church is earnestly endeavoring to merit the honor of her heritage in missionary zeal by her faithful and generous support of denominational, local and world wide causes.

The Language Problem

The membership of First Reformed Church in the early years of its history was almost entirely German. In fact, all preaching and teaching were done in the German language from 1753, the year of the congregation's organization, to 1842. Some years prior to 1842, there was some agitation for English preaching. The younger generation was speaking it. Business and legal documents were executed in English. Teaching in the public school, established in Reading in 1835, was done in English.

A step to solve the question was taken on Saturday, February 5, 1842, when an election was held for a pastor, following the resignation of the Rev. William Pauli, with the definite provision that the new pastor must be able to preach in German and English. The Rev. J. C. Bucher who was bi-lingually qualified, was elected. Thus in 1842, English preaching was begun on alternate Sundays. It was also in this year that the recording of the minutes of the congregation in English was begun and thereafter continued.

Even though the introduction of English preaching alternately with German was a step in the right direction towards unity in the congregation and growth of the congregation, it did not solve the problem entirely. As years passed, there was more insistent demand for English preaching only. At the same time there remained those who preferred the German. A number of families left the church because of this unsettled problem and united with the Presbyterian and Episcopalian Churches where all preaching was in English. Their descendants are numbered even today among the leading families of those churches.

It was not until September 1, 1891, during the pastorate of Rev. Henry Mosser, that German liturgies and preaching were abolished.

Our Laity

The limitations of space forbid anything like an adequate treatment of this subject. We are aware, too, that there are even now hundreds of names written in the "Lamb's Book of Life" which were never writ high in the halls of fame. They are those who in faithfulness came regularly to the House of God to worship and in a quiet spirit carried the divine blessings into home and workshop. Of such we have a notable army of laymen worshipping in First Church today. It is for them, living and dead, that we offer our prayer of thanksgiving and praise.

There are also those who have rendered long and distinguished service by use of their special gifts and talents. A brief reference must suffice.

We wish to call especial attention to the place and service of members of First Church in the Revolutionary War where the records show that they served with distinction. They were Colonels George Nagle, Nicholas Lotz, Henry Haller and Joseph Hiester, and Captains Peter Nagle, Jacob Bower and Daniel Rose.

Colonel Joseph Hiester was a delegate from Berks County to the Provincial Conference which was held in Carpenter Hall, Philadelphia, in June 1776. Upon his return he raised a company of men who, with their commanding officer, joined General Washingon's troops in the Battle at Long Island. A number of Hiester's men were killed in that engagement and Colonel Hiester and others were taken prisoner. After his release he returned to Reading a very ill man. Upon recovery he again raised a large number of troops. He himself remained in the army to the close of the war. Several times he served as Presidential elector. He served as such when John Adams was elected President and Thomas Jefferson, Vice President. He served fourteen years in the Congress of the United States and one term as Governor of Pennsylvania, refusing the nomination for a second term.

COLONEL AND GOVERNOR JOSEPH HIESTER,
devoted churchman and Christian Patriot

Colonel Hiester was not only a noble patriot. He was also a Christian and a good churchman. His name, as an elder of the congregation, appears frequently with others of the Consistory, who personally signed their names to the minutes of the Consistory. It was the custom for many years for all Consistorymen present to sign the minutes of their meeting. The records also reveal him as a very generous contributor to the work of the church. He was, indeed, a busy public official but not too busy to give a prominent place in his life to the service of his church.

Colonel Hiester was born in Bern Township on November 18,

1752, the son of John Hiester. He died on June 10, 1832, and was buried in the cemetery at the church.

Col. George Nagel was born near Coblenz, Germany. He served in the French and Indian War. In 1771, he was elected Sheriff of Berks County. When the Revolutionary War was upon us, he was the first person to raise a company in Berks County to fight for American freedom. He was married to Rebecca, a daughter of Mordecai Lincoln of Exeter Township.

Capt. Peter Nagel was a brother of Colonel Nagel. He was prominent in military affairs and served as a Captain from 1777 to 1783. Captain Nagel held a reception in his home at the South East Corner of Fifth and Washington Streets, for President George Washington in 1794 when Washington visited Reading. Captain Nagel served as Justice of the Peace, Coroner and County Treasurer. He was also a faithful member of the Consistory of First Church.

Colonel Nicholas Lotz was born in the Palatinate, Germany, February 20, 1740. He was a member of the Provincial Conference in Philadelphia in June 1776. In 1780, Col. Lotz was appointed Commissioner of Forage. He was several times elected a member of the Legislature. He was a member of the Consistory and an active member of the church. Mr. Charles K. Snell, an active member of the congregation at this writing and for many years Secretary of the Consistory whose minutes were beautifully written, is a great-great-grandson of Col. Lotz. Miss Friederica Lotz who has been for many years an excellent and faithful teacher in our Church School, and her brother, William H. Lotz, are also descendants of Colonel Lotz. Col. Lotz died November 29, 1807, and was buried in the church cemetery.

Capt. Jacob Bower, born 1757, served as a lieutenant in the Company of Capt. Benjamin Weiser, son of Conrad Weiser. In addition to holding many public offices in Reading and Berks County, he was a member of the Consistory and active in the work of the church.

Col. Henry Haller was another prominent member of the congregation. He, too, was a delegate to the Provincial Conference in

Philadelphia in 1776 and was also a member of the General Assembly from 1776 to 1781.

Captain Daniel Rose, clockmaker by trade, was a member of the Consistory and prominent in church affairs. He, too, entertained President Washington in his home in 1794.

We could continue the citations of notable service on the part of others. Let us remember that besides the above-named officers, there were many privates from First Church who served in the Continental Army and without whose loyalty and devotion Colonels and Captains would have been helpless.

The impressive fact to the writer of the paper is that there should be so large a number of officers and soldiers from a congregation which then numbered only about 100 members. A second fact of even greater significance is the silent witness of the minutes of the congregation which show that the above named officers were active members of the Consistory. They were not only members, but active members. We may say with assurance that no other denominational group in Reading made so significant a contribution to the cause of freedom during the Revolution as did the Reformed. There may be cause here to reflect gratefully upon the influence of John Calvin.

During the First World War, 118 sons of the congregation served. The four making the supreme sacrifice were: George W. Auchenbach, Ralph C. Close, Henry L. Eyrich and J. Walter Wacha.

There were 140 sons and daughters of First Church who served in our Armed Forces during the Second World War. The four who sacrificed their lives for the cause were: James Denton Cliff, LeRoy W. Correll, Harry A. Noll and Joseph Clifford Zug.

Since World War II, there have been to date fifty sons and one daughter of the congregation in military service. This large number is due to the nation's program of Universal Military Training and the recent War in Korea.

We turn now from the congregation's representation in military service to a few references of service in the local work of the church.

Mr. A. J. Fisher was Superintendent of the Primary Department for about fifty years and served the Church and Sunday School with loyal devotion. His active service ended about 1924.

Mr. Selos R. Barnet had a continuous record of service for fifty-five years. He served periodically as Deacon and Elder and was General Superintendent of the Church School from 1892 to 1945. He also served on important committees and was influential in shaping the policies of the congregation. His was a distinguished service to First Reformed Church.

In the ministry of music, a notable and distinguished record was established by Mr. Frederick C. Moyer and his son Myron R. Moyer. Mr. F. C. Moyer was elected organist June 28, 1884. He passed away on December 7, 1917. During the months he was confined to his home by illness, prior to his death, his son, Mr. Myron R. Moyer officiated at the organ. Mr. Myron R. Moyer was elected organist on January 14, 1918, and served until a few months prior to his death on February 25, 1951. Miss Charlotte G. Miller, a member of the congregation, served as organist during the several months of illness immediately preceding his death and until his successor was elected. Thus, father and son rendered a continuous service in the Ministry of Music for a period of sixty-seven years.

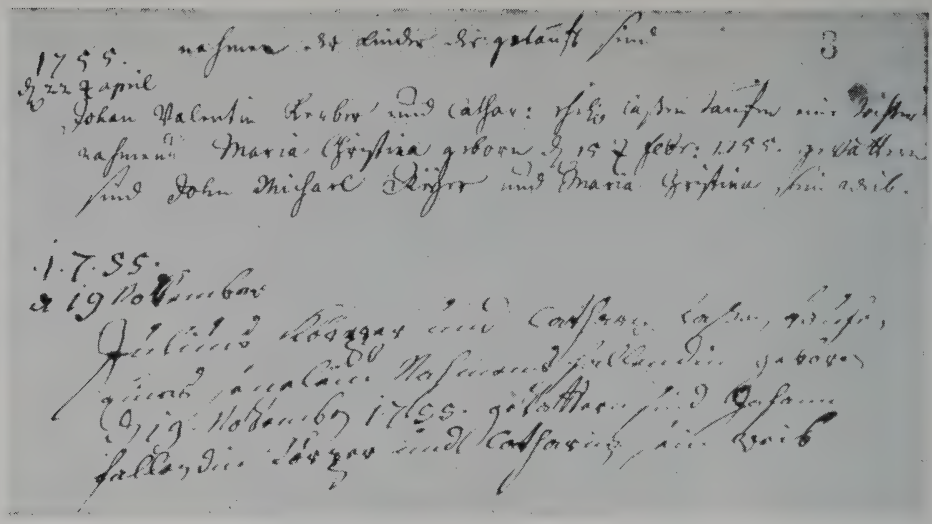
Mr. Norman A. Hiester was elected Mr. Moyer's successor on May 27, 1951.

On November 7, 1902, Miss S. Emma Ziemer, daughter of the congregation, left for Yochow City, China, where she served as missionary for eleven years until her untimely accidental death. The Ziemer Girls' School in Yochow was named in grateful memory of her devoted work as a teacher. This was the first girls' school established in China under the Board of International Missions of the Reformed Church in the United States of America.

MISS SARAH EMMA ZIEMER
Missionary to China from First Church,
1902–1913

We list the names of twenty-four sons of the congregation who have entered the Christian ministry, namely: B. S. Schneck, Peter S. Fisher, Daniel Ziegler, Henry Aurand, W. K. Zieber, J. O. Miller, John S. Ermentrout, Fred P. Beidler, Reinhart Smith, Christian Kessler, Tobias Kessler, John M. Kessler (three brothers), J. Alvin Reber, George W. Griffith, David A. Souders, Edward O. Keen, Harry H. Price, Harry A. Hartman, Paul R. Shearer, Allen Z. Bodey, Howard J. B. Ziegler and John F. Schaeffer, Jr. The Revs. Paul R. Schearer and Howard J. B. Ziegler were baptized in First Reformed Church but some time later the families of which they were members united with other Reformed Churches in the city. The Revs. Allen Z. Bodey, Paul Schearer, and Harry Price entered the ministry of denominations other than Reformed. There is a possibility that this list may not be complete.

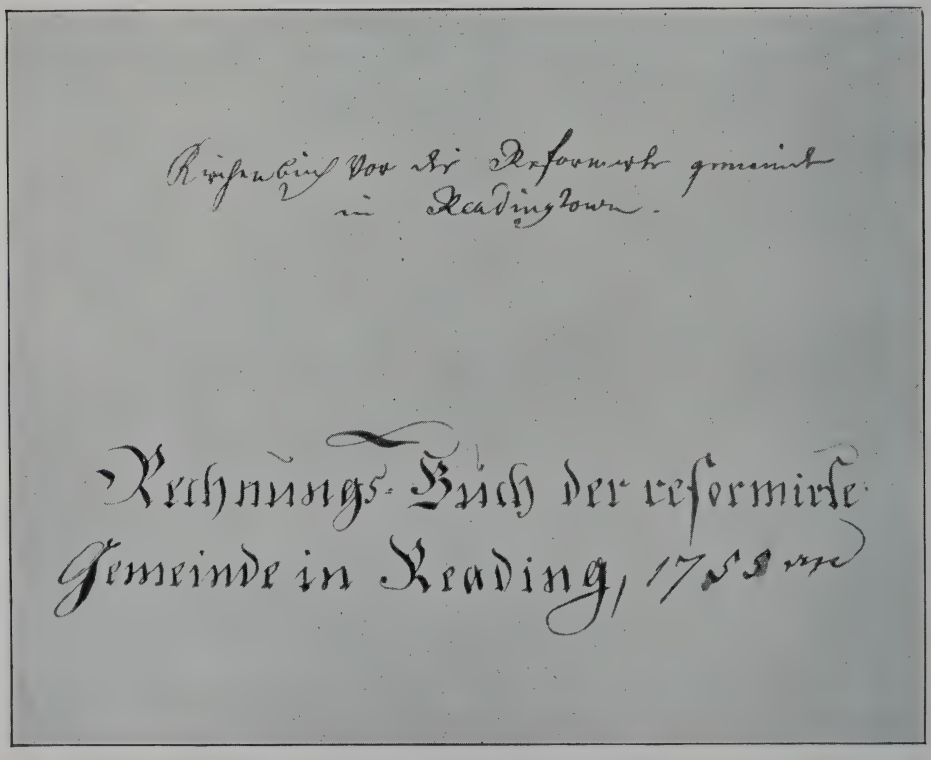
Miss E. Louise Auchenbach, an active member of the congregation, graduated from Eden Theological Seminary in 1949, receiving the degree Master of Arts in Christian Education. She served as Director of Religious Education for two years in the First Evangelical Reformed Church, Houston, Texas. At present she is on the Staff of the Women's Guild with offices in Cleveland, Ohio.



FIRST BAPTISMAL ENTRIES

"April 22, 1755. John Valentine Kerber and Catharine, his wife, had a daughter baptized, by name, Maria Christina, born on the fifteenth of February, 1755. Sponsors were John Michael Ryer and his wife, Maria Christina." (Prof. Hinke says this baptism is in the hand writing of Rev. William Stoy).

"November 19, 1755. Julius Koerper and Catharine had a son baptized by the name, Valentine, born on the 19th of November, 1755. Sponsors were John Valentine Koerper and his wife, Catharine."



TITLE PAGE OF FIRST RECORD BOOK

Translation: "Church Book for the Reformed congregation in Readingtown. Account Book for the Reformed Congregation in Reading, 1755."

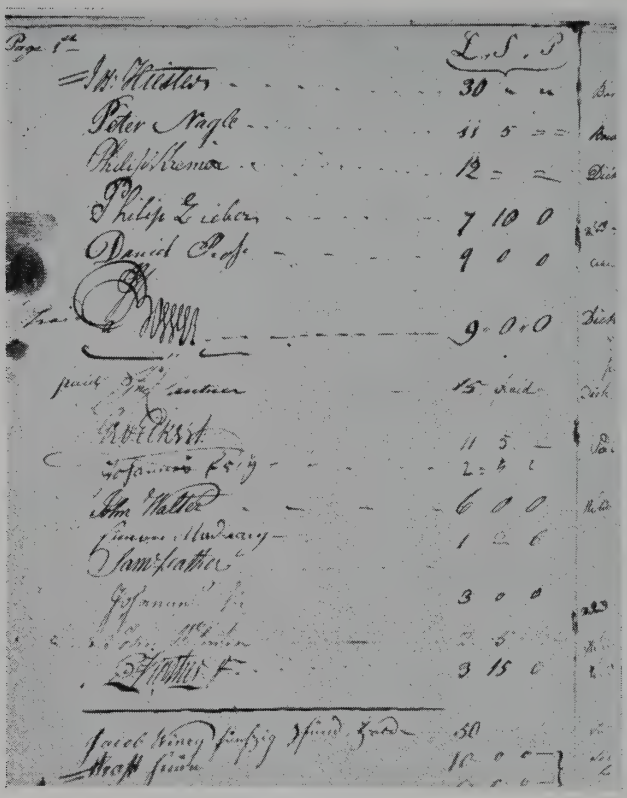
Sundry Important Facts and Events

Chronologically Arranged

Our record of Ministerial Acts, Baptisms, Confirmations, Marriages and Funerals, was begun in 1755, with the first entry being a baptism. It is of interest, however, to note that the first ministerial act recorded for the Reformed congregation is not found in our own book but appears in the earliest record of Trinity Lutheran Church of Reading, Pennsylvania. Prof. William J. Hinke, reliable historian in the Reformed Church, examined the records of Trinity Lutheran Church and makes this comment in his book, "Ministers of the German Reformed Congregations in Pennsylvania and Other Colonies in the Eighteenth Century," "In 1753 and 1754, we find Michael (Rev. Jacob Philip Michael, Reformed Pastor) at Reading, where he baptized three children. Curiously enough, their names and baptisms are recorded in the Lutheran Church record, with the explicit statement that Michael baptized them. The first baptism was on February 6, 1753; the last on November 10, 1754." Daniel Miller in his "History of the Reformed Church in Reading, Pa.," notes also that the Rev. Mr. Michael baptized the daughter of Rev. Tobias Wagner, the first Lutheran minister in Reading.

Our financial record was begun in 1756. The first entry reads as follows: "October 31, 1756, I paid for two quarts of wine for use in the Holy Communion—0-5-0." The numerals refer to Pounds, Shillings and Pence. The second entry is as follows: "November 19, 1756, I paid to the congregation on account of the schoolmaster, the sum of 1-6-0."

Our "Minutes" date from 1787 to the present, being in the German language until 1842. The "Minutes" in German have been translated into English by the Rev. A. S. Leiby of Pen Argyl, Pa., under the direction of the present Pastor, Dr. Wetzel. All records of Ministerial Acts have been transcribed from our earliest record



LIST OF SUBSCRIBERS TO AN APPEAL FOR FUNDS IN 1795

The amounts subscribed are listed in Pounds, Shillings and Pence. The names, in order, are Joseph Hiester, Peter Nagle, Philip Kremer, Philip Zieber, Daniel Rose, J. Bower, John Kantner, George Eckert, John Frey, John Walter, Simon Madery, Samuel Feather, John Kuhn, John Witman, P. Feather, Jr., Jacob Winey (hard money), and Kraft Heun.

of 1755 to 1942. All translations and transcriptions have been bound in triplicate and are available at the Church Office, the Historical Society of Berks County and the Historical Society of the Reformed Church in the United States located in the Fackenthal Library of Franklin and Marshall College at Lancaster, Pa. This valuable and voluminous piece of work was made possible through

the generous contributions of Mr. Henry D. Dietrich, a member of the congregation. The work of transcription was done by Miss Bertha V. Price, a member of First Reformed Church.

The Coetus, later called a Synod, was organized in 1747 by Rev. Michael Schlatter. It was the first organization of the congregations through their representatives, pastors and elders, into an official body. The first meeting was effected with four ministers and twenty-seven elders.

A record of the meetings of the Coetus and Synod in First Reformed Church are listed below with the names of the presiding officers.

Coetus, 1766, Rev. Philip William Otterbein
1771, Rev. F. L. Henop
1777, Rev. J. H. Helfrich
1782, Rev. C. D. Weyberg
1785, Rev. A. Blumer
1788, Rev. Helfenstein
Synod, 1794, Rev. Caspar Wack
1799, Rev. Daniel Wagner
1804, Rev. J. Rahauser
1811, Rev. F. L. Herman
1821, Rev. L. L. Hinsch
1841, Rev. F. L. Hoffaditz
1856, Rev. S. Helfenstein
1876, Rev. John Beck
1890, Rev. T. O. Stem
1904, Rev. Charles E. Creitz
(Special Meeting)
1910, Rev. J. W. Memminger

May 2-3, 1764. The following quotation is taken from the minutes of the Coetus, held in Philadelphia on the above date. "The vacant congregations are in a deplorable condition, and we must commend the same to your Reverences in the most urgent manner. Lancaster, Reading, York, Tulpehocken, Whitehall, Easton, Goshenhoppen, important places for preachers, request, beg, and pray through us for help." What the people so greatly desired were the ministrations of

a pastor. Equally as great, and perhaps even greater, was their longing to hear the word of God read to them and expounded. Gladly did they listen to two hour sermons which then were not the exception to the rule. In my research to write this brief history, I have many times read of this "hunger for the Word of God." I have pondered upon its deep inner meaning and significance.

Jan. 1, 1765. "We, the officers of the Reformed congregation; namely, Henrich Haller, Valentine Karber, Isaac Jung and George Bernhardt, submitted our accounts of alms money to the congregation from March 10, 1764, to January 1, 1765. The total receipts in gold amounted to 31-8-8½." (Pounds, Shillings, Pence.)

On January 8, 1787, the Consistory ruled that only those members who contributed to the support of the congregation, excepting the poor, should have burial privileges on the "graveyard."

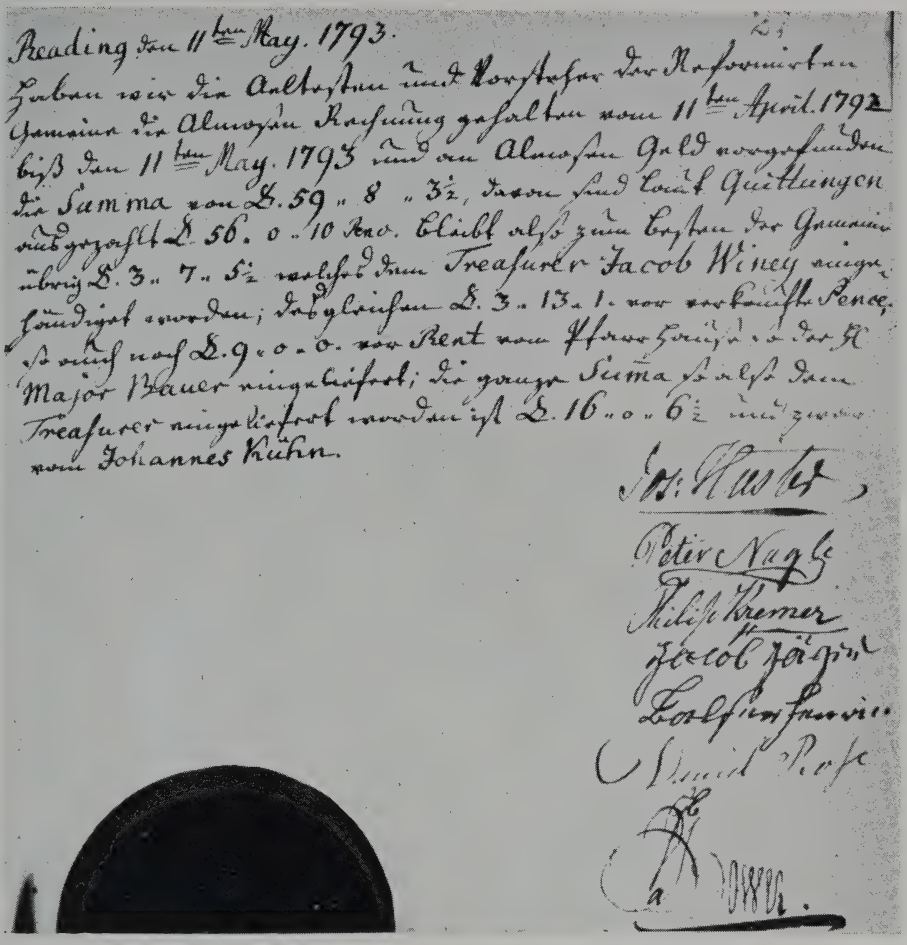
July 9, 1803. "Today Christopher Scherer who had the legacy of the late Melchior Myer, who died several years ago, paid this over to the Consistory, amounting to 75-7-9. The interest is to be used to pay tuition of poor children." (This means tuition for attendance in the Parochial School.)

Daniel Miller's History of the Reformed Church in Reading states "that in 1806 a lottery was held for the benefit of the congregation and the school. The drawing took place on July 1. Nicholas Dick's name appeared on the tickets as commissioner."

In the historical archives of the congregation there is deposited a lottery ticket which reads: "First Class of the Reading Church and School-House. Extra Lottery No. 2370. The Bearer of this Ticket will be entitled to the Prize drawn to its number, if demanded in one year . . . Subject to a Deduction of 20 percent, (Signed) F Smith, Commissioner."

The ticket is not dated. The words "First Class," above, refer to the number of the Sunday School Class. It was the custom to number the classes.

Oct. 20, 1813. Catherine Ruth presented a new Chandelier to the



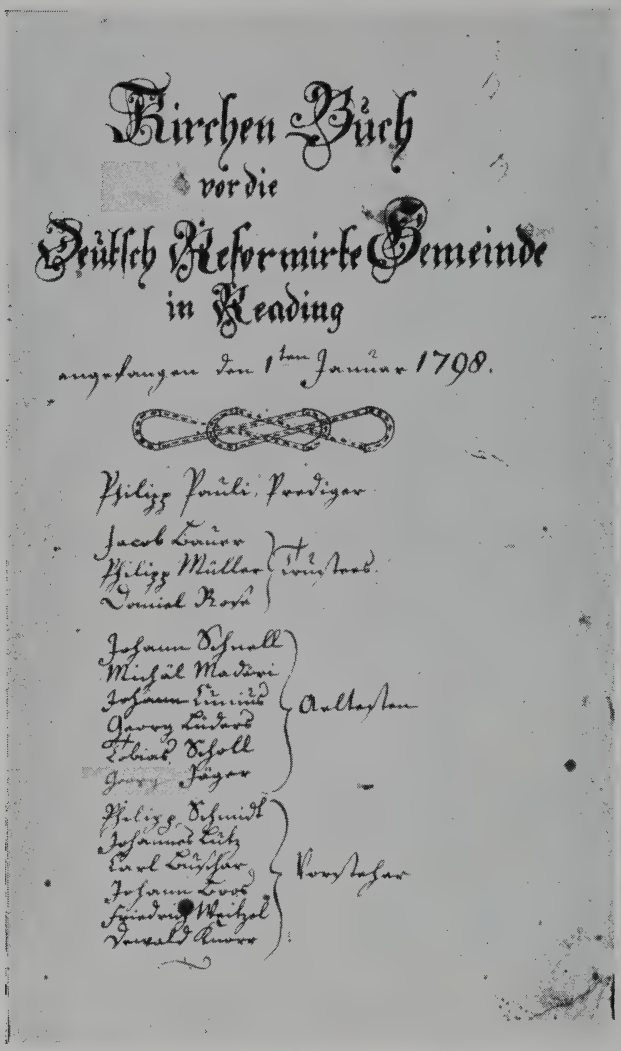
Reading den 11ten May. 1793.

Haben wir die Aeltesten und Vorsteher der Reformirten Gemeine die Almosen Rechnung gehalten vom 11ten April 1792 bis den 11ten May. 1793 und an Almosen Geld vorgefunden die Summa von £. 59 " 8 " 3½, davon sind laut Quittungen ausgezahlt £. 56. 0 " 10 kno. bleibt also zum besten der Gemeine übrig £. 3 " 7 " 5½ welches dem Treasurer Jacob Winey eingehändigt worden; dabey kommen £. 3 " 13 " 1. von verkaufte Pence. So auch noch £. 9 " 0 " 0. von Rent vom Pfarr Hause so der Major Bauer eingeliefert; die ganze Summa so also dem Treasurer eingeliefert worden ist £. 16 " 0 " 6½ und zwar von Johannes Kuhn.

Joseph Hiester
Peter Nagle
Philip Kreuser
Jacob Jaeger
Balsar Henrici
Daniel Rose
C. A. Bower

FINANCIAL SETTLEMENT

"Reading, May 11, 1793. We, the elders and deacons of the Reformed congregation have conducted the annual alms accounting from April 11, 1792, to May 11, 1793, and have found that receipts amounted to 59—8—3½ (Pounds, Shillings, Pence). According to the receipts 56—0—10 of this amount was paid out. Hence, there remains for the congregation 3—7—5½, which sum was handed to the treasurer, Jacob Winey, also 3—13—1 for Pence sold and 9—0—0 as rent for the parsonage, which Major Bauer handed in. The total sum which was handed to the treasurer amounted to 16—0—6½, which was from John Kuhn."


Kirchen Buch
vor die
Deutsch Reformirte Gemeinde
in Reading
angefangen den 1ten January 1798.

CHURCH BOOK

Church Book of the German Reformed Congregation in Reading Begun January 1, 1798. *Trustees,* Jacob Bauer, Philip Müller, Daniel Rose. *Elders,* John Schnell, Michäl Maderi, John Cunnius, George Lüders, Tobias Scholl, George Yeager. *Deacons,* Philip Schmidt, John Lutz, Carl Buschar, John Boos, Frederick Weitzel, Donald Knoor.

Reformed congregation which she purchased in Philadelphia for the sum of eighty dollars.

The English money system was used from the time of our first financial records, 1756 to 1813. Then, for several years, both the English and American systems were used in the same account as indicated: "November 3, 1817, paid to Rev. William Pauli $120.00 or 45-0-0." After 1818, the American system was used.

August 21, 1813. "Resolved, that when Consistorymen are absent from a meeting, except for sickness, they be fined fifty cents." Later records show that the fine was paid.

January 3, 1814. "Resolved, that the congregation elect four members as a 'vigilance committee' and attend all Consistory meetings, having the right to vote on all expenditures and improvements."

May 27, 1814. "The grave-digger, John Gaily, is to pump the organ, keep the church and cemetery clean and keep a fire in the stove during the winter for which he is to receive fourteen dollars." (The congregation had its own cemetery adjoining the church property. The term grave-digger was used for the person who not only digged the graves but did the work of the sexton.)

January 27, 1815. The Consistory elected Mr. Joseph Hiester president due to the passing of Rev. Philip Pauli. A committee on funeral arrangements was appointed and requested to invite the Consistory of the Lutheran congregation and the pastor, the Rev. Mr. Muhlenberg, the Consistories of Sinking Spring and Schwarzwald congregations.

March 9, 1816. "That the grave-digger shall receive two dollars for a grave for a single coffin, three dollars for a double coffin and $1.50 for a child's grave. Resolved that the minister, Mr. Pauli (Rev. William Pauli) shall receive an addition to his salary, namely, six cords of hickory wood."

January 29, 1817. "Resolved that when requested the 'collection bag' shall not be passed on the occasion of a funeral. 'This applies only to the mourners.' " The collection bag above referred to has

reference to the "Klingelsack" which was a cone shaped velvet bag attached to a long pole. The bag usually had a small bell or bells attached to the bottom.

Feb. 16, 1821. John Roland was elected schoolmaster. "Salary is as follows: to serve the church, 80 dollars; to teach a child for three months, one dollar; eight cords of oak wood." "To serve the church" refers to sexton duties.

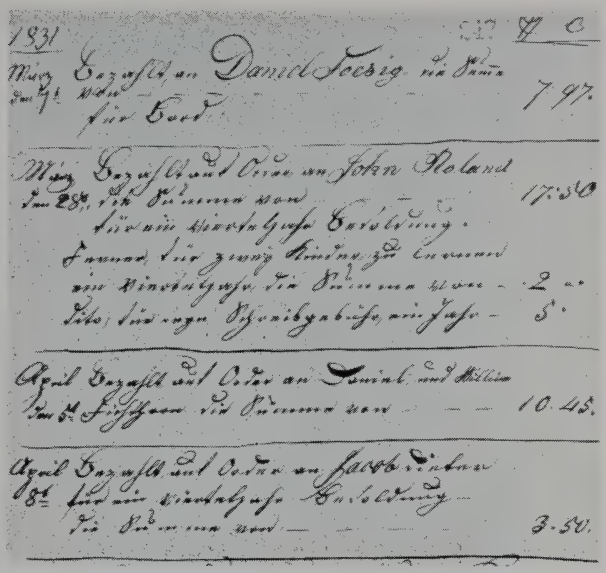
December 8, 1822. "Resolved that Mr. Gabriel Hiester shall pay five dollars for the funeral of his daughter because no collection was taken." (Funerals were generally held in the church.)

May 27, 1824. "Resolved that Mr. John Hiester and Mr. Daniel Foesig shall be a committee to have the parsonage painted." (Location of parsonage prior to 1875 is not known. In 1875, one was built adjoining the church which now serves as Church School rooms and Church Office.)

May 23, 1831. "The Consistory and a number of church members of the Reformed congregation met in the schoolhouse to consult with each other regarding the building of a new church." There are listed the names of 36 persons as present at the meeting. It was decided that a new church was needed. Committees were appointed to ascertain what sum could be raised by subscription. They were appointed for the following areas: Reading; Cumru, Alsace and Exeter townships. The new church was built in 1831-1832, replacing the stone church of 1761.

On October 25, 1844, in First Church, Dr. Philip Schaff, born in Chur, Switzerland, and educated in Germany, later to become a renowned church historian, was installed as Professor of Church History and Biblical Literature in the Theological Seminary at Mercersburg, Pa. It was on this occasion that Dr. Schaff delivered an address on "The Principle of Protestantism" which disturbed the theological world, but which also gave him early fame.

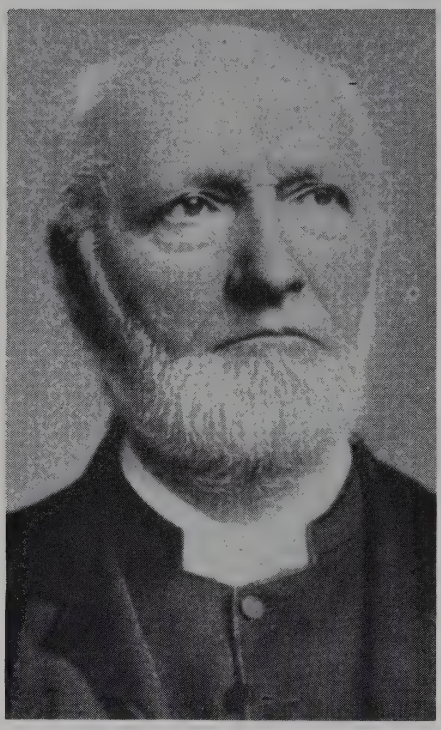
The Triennial Convention in 1847. What was the Triennial Convention? When the Synod of the Reformed Church met in Win-



ACCOUNT OF EXPENDITURES

"March 7, 1831. Paid to Daniel Foesig for boards—$7.97. March 28. Paid to John Roland (school teacher) for quarter year salary, $17.50. Paid to John Roland for two children in school for one quarter year, $2.00. For cleaning and writing books for one year, $5.00. April 5, Paid to Daniel and William Fichthorn, $10.45. April 8, Paid Jacob Dieter, quarter year salary, $3.50." (The next item, not on above "cut" is for $86.87 for a quarter year salary of Rev. William Pauli.)

chester, Virginia, in 1843, it was decided that a triennial convention of the Dutch Reformed Church and the German Reformed Church be held jointly. Delegates were chosen by the respective synods. The purpose was the cultivation of a closer fellowship between the denominations. The first meeting was held in Harrisburg, Pa., in 1844. The second Triennial Convention was held in First Church, Reading, 1847. Rev. Bernard Wolff of the German Reformed Church was chosen president and Rev. Oscar Gregory of the Dutch Reformed Church, secretary. Dr. Raymond W. Albright in his



REV. PHILIP SCHAFF, D.D.
Distinguished Church Historian, who spoke on a number of occasions in First Church

book, "Two Centuries of Reading, Pa.," makes the following report of the Reading convention: "The triennial convention of the Dutch Reformed Church and the German Reformed Church in the United States held joint sessions in this building. (Reference to the church of 1831.) The delegates to this gathering included such distinguished men as the Reverend Doctor Philip Schaff, then professor in the Reformed Seminary at Mercersburg, and later at Union Seminary in New York, and who had delivered his inaugural address at the time of his election to the Mercersburg professorship in this church; ex-governor Vroom of New Jersey, and the Reverend Doctor van Wranken of Rutgers College, who preached the opening sermon. After a great deal of discussion about the possibility of

union between these branches of the Reformed churches, the association was dissolved and it was decided to return to the former mode of respect and communion between these closely related denominations." Only a few such conventions were held and they had no legal powers.

In January, 1847, John B. Gough, distinguished representative of the temperance movement, delivered three addresses to very large congregations in First Reformed Church.

July 9, 1848. We quote the minute of a Special Consistory meeting.

"At a meeting, previously appointed, and held in the church on the evening of the 9th of July, 1848, in pursuance of resolutions previously adopted by the Consistory, the following persons were regularly dismissed from this church with a view to organize The 2nd German Reformed Church of this city, viz., Irvin Benson, John Ermentrout, A. F. Boas, Esq., Andrew S. Rhoads, John Hartman, B. Dissler, William Ermentrout, Edmond H. Zieber, George B. Snyder, Philip Deringer, Franklin Beidler, Henry A. Lantz, and Charles Fisher, Mrs. Irvin Benson, Mrs. Deringer, Mrs. A. F. Boas, Mrs. Andrews, Miss Anna L. Zieber, Elenor Leize, Catherine Helfenstine, Rebecca Lantz, Leonora Deringer, Serephena Deringer, Mary M. Smith and Susan B. Goodhart."

"These persons, together with others, who were not members of this church, in all 30 souls, presented themselves as the beginning material to organize 2nd Church, our pastor (Rev. J. C. Bucher) in the presence of the congregation, immediately proceeded to organize and constitute said 2nd Church by solemn ceremonies, and at the same time, he installed 2 Elders and 4 Deacons, previously elected, to preside over the interests of said 2nd Church." Attest, H. C. Ritter, Secretary.

The minutes indicate that Second Church was organized and founded to provide a Reformed congregation in the city with English preaching. We note, however, that in above minute it is referred to as The Second German Reformed Church. First Church

gave some assistance to Second Church in its early years but not what was expected or promised. The congregation had a terrific struggle for existence. The Dutch Reformed Church offered to pay its debts if it became a member of their denomination. The offer was rejected.

February 28, 1850, "Resolved that pews be rented to our members, and that three days be set apart for members to call at the church to rent the pews." It was designated that payment of rents be begun on April 1, 1850. A minute in the pastorate of Dr. Moyer, dated February 3, 1919, reads as follows: "It was moved and seconded that the Pew Tablets hanging upon the wall of the vestibule of the church be removed permanently, and that an inscription 'All Seats Free' be painted on the outside bulletin." This minute means that by this time, or perhaps several years earlier, pew rents were abolished. The system of renting pews brought into the church additional funds but also additional problems.

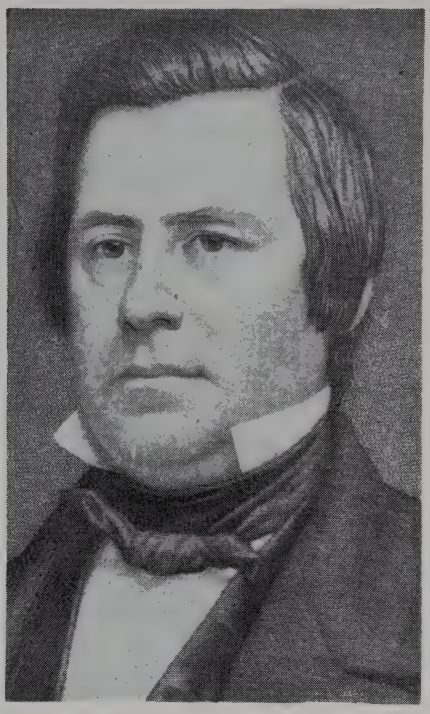
July 22, 1850. "That the Consistory will make every needful exertion to raise by subscription all they possibly can towards the removal of Marshall College to Lancaster city." This meant from Mercersburg, Pennsylvania.

May 8, 1853, a new organ was dedicated at which time the sermon was preached by the Reverend Philip Schaff, D.D. The new organ was erected by Mr. Samuel Bohler at a cost of $1,600.00.

In 1853, the annual Congregational meeting was attended by twelve persons. Throughout the history of the congregation, the records show poor attendances at the annual meetings.

June 23, 1856. "On motion of David Neff, it was resolved that the balance of $12.14½ cents in Brother Addy Gerry's hands are allowed him for services and counterfeit money taken in by him for Pew Rents."

January 26, 1857. "Resolved that the Secretary is hereby authorized to draw an order of sixty dollars in favor of our worthy Pastor, A. S. Leinbach, to meet the expenses incurred by his child's funeral."



REV. HENRY HARBAUGH, D.D.
Reformed Pastor, Poet and Author, who participated in a number of services in First Church. He is the author of the beloved hymn, "Jesus I Live To Thee"

April 12, 1858. This is a report of a special committee to confer with the choir leader, Mr. Joseph Lutz. Among other matters, the committee reported, "Your Committee purchased a new carpet and laid it in front of the organ, also three additional spittoons, and requested Mr. Lutz for himself, and to use his influence with the rest of the members of the Choir to keep the same in proper condition."

In 1858 Rev. Benjamin Schneider of Aintab, Turkey, visited Reading and preached in First Church. He was the first foreign missionary sent out and supported by the Reformed Church in the

United States. We remind you that his appearance in First Church was an event of unusual significance.

The three-hundredth anniversary of the adoption of the Heidelberg Catechism was brought to a close by a general convention in First Reformed Church, Reading, May 21 to 25, 1864. The opening convention of the celebration was held in Philadelphia, January 19 to 23, 1863. Dr. Benjamin Bausman, who on the following August 10th became pastor of First Reformed Church, read a paper on "Catechetics and Catechetical Instruction." The first session of the Reading convention was held on a Saturday evening when the sermon was preached by Dr. Daniel Zacharias of Frederick, Maryland. On Sunday morning, Dr. Philip Schaff preached a German sermon after which Holy Communion was celebrated. There were at this date three Reformed congregations in Reading; namely, First, Second and St. John's. Dr. E. V. Gerhart presided over the convention. On Thursday morning, May 26, 1864, Dr. Henry Harbaugh, pastor, author, poet and hymn writer in the Reformed Church, was installed as Professor of Practical and Didactical Theology in the seminary at Mercersburg, Pa. His two-hour inaugural address was on the theme "Christological Theology."

June 10, 1866. Consistory refused to have the High School use the church for commencement. Declared that the church must be used for religious purposes only. Same action repeated June 1, 1868.

January 14, 1867. At a congregational meeting it was decided to proceed with the exhumation of the bodies in the church cemetery to provide land for the erection of a new church to accommodate an English congregation. The vote was 31 yeas and 12 nays. This was for a long time a controversial topic.

February 4, 1867. A special committee reported that lots could be purchased in Charles Evans Cemetery for three cents per square foot for the re-interment of those bodies not removed by friends or relatives.

February 1, 1869. A resolution was passed requesting approval

HOLY COMMUNION SERVICE
Gift of Mite Society in 1865

of the State Legislature to sell a portion of the cemetery lots. This was later granted and clear title could be given.

April 19, 1869. Committee reported that lots could be purchased at 6 cents per square foot in Charles Evans Cemetery.

May 29, 1869. Committee reported having purchased lots in Charles Evans Cemetery.

February 7, 1870. "On motion the Treasurer was instructed to pay to the Lebanon Classis the sum of seventy dollars being the assessment on this congregation toward the payment of interest on debt of Palatinate College at Myerstown.

March 6, 1871. "The Pastor (Dr. Benjamin Bausman) now

HOLY COMMUNION SERVICE
Plates dated, 1894 and 1900

stated that unless a movement was made to build a new church, he would feel it his duty to resign at the first meeting in April next to take effect July 1, 1871, which would then give the congregation three months time to call another minister." "It was then on motion resolved that the Building Committee be instructed to erect a church building on the Northwest portion of the graveyard . . . instead of on the Parker property." Note: When Dr. Bausman came to First Church, 1863, there had been an understanding that a new church would be built. That question and the removal of the bodies from the church cemetery which were inter-related problems, continued for at least six years causing controversy amongst the people and very great worry to the Pastor.

January 5, 1874. The congregation amended the constitution granting the right of vote to women.

June 9, 1889. "The appeal of Mayors of Pittsburgh and Allegheny, endorsed by our Mayor, was read from the pulpit asking immediate relief for Johnstown sufferers. The awful calamity was just becoming known. Storms and floods interrupted communication. Collection was $328.00." Dr. Mosser, Pastor.

March 30, 1891. (Easter) "The first time the Consistory allowed the Communion Offering to be devoted to Benevolence. This is the order for the future. (It is so today.) At long last, after many requests, the Consistory granted the request of the pastor." "In 1882, our church debt, on account of remodeling, was $23,000.00. The last remnant was paid by the Finance Committee April 28, 1891. Bless the Lord, O my soul." At another place, Dr. Mosser wrote, "Gott Sei Dank."

October 11, 1891. "A New Era. All services in one language since September 1, 1891. First Communion in one language."

May 21, 1899. (Whitsunday) "On Wednesday a confirmation service unannounced was held. Hon. Adam H. Leader, Mayor of Reading, was admitted to church membership."

April 7, 1901 (Easter Sunday) "On Friday evening had service. All stores and shops were open and factories at work. Confirmation service was held Friday evening. Only twenty-nine were confirmed. Having four Reformed churches divided the territory, so classes here cannot be so large in future as they were." (There are now fifteen congregations in Reading and the immediate vicinity.) "Having given private communion since Thursday, I was very nearly worn out Sunday evening before service was completed." (Dr. Mosser) (The present pastor full well understands the meaning of the above remark. We average a higher number of private communions today.)

The first convention of the Huguenot Society of Pennsylvania (organized on January 9, 1918, in the rooms of the Berks County Historical Society), was held in First Reformed Church, Reading, Pa., on April 13, 1918, the date of the anniversary of the Edict of

Nantes, April 13, 1598. Three of the first officers were members of the Reformed Church in the United States. They were: Rev. John Baer Stoudt, President; Mrs. Edith White Birch, Secretary; Rev. Lee M. Erdman, Chaplain.

Shortly after 1776 and until the property was sold (1850), the Consistory held its meetings in the schoolhouse.

A reference to the minutes of the congregation of about one hundred years ago, more or less, will reveal a number of instances where members were excommunicated for making slurring remarks either against the church or some member of the Consistory. During the same period there were also a number of cases where the Consistory decided to take legal action for the collection of church dues. On occasion, too, it was resolved to demand better order in the balcony.

In the first half dozen decades of the congregation's life, Consistory meetings were held semi-annually or perhaps quarterly.

The Ministry of First Reformed Church

Of the first eleven pastors, two were born in Switzerland and nine in Germany. Their pastorates covered a period of sixty-three years.

We should bear in mind the conditions that existed in this earliest period of our Reformed Churches in America. Congregations were small and in process of forming and solidifying their organizations. They were widely scattered. The country was rugged. Means of travel was slow. There were not sufficient ministers to care properly for the congregations. The church members were "hungry" for the word of God and the experience of public worship. These conditions proved a ripe field for anyone with a gift of speech and a bit of education to offer himself as a pastor of the flock. Because of the great desire and need for leadership, the people generally accepted such proffered services. This frequently led to serious problems because not all those who assumed the prerogatives of a pastor's duties were qualified. They were what we term "independents" or "free lance" ministers. Against such the Reformed Church of Holland tried to protect the newly organized congregations in America by supervision which required all to be examined and also ordained by it. This supervision proved to be both bane and blessing. It kept some undesirables out of the Christian ministry and it, on occasion, prevented some good men from entering the ministry. Even after the North and South Synods of Holland allowed the "Coetus" in America to examine candidates for the Christian ministry, they did not permit the Church Fathers here to ordain them. It was furthermore true that the Holland Synods were, even upon recommendation, very slow to ordain.

In this connection, we quote from the "History of the Eastern Synod of the Reformed Church in the United States" by Prof. H. M. J. Klein.

"For sixty-four years, from 1729 to 1793, the connection of the Reformed congregations in America with Holland had continued. During all this time many donations had been received from abroad. The Pennsylvania Churches had been under the supervision of the Holland Church throughout the period of the Coetus, especially since the organization of the Reformed Ministerium of the congregations of Pennsylvania by Michael Schlatter in 1747. The word 'Coetus,' derived from the Latin meant a coming together or a convention. The Deputies of the Synods of North and South Holland called their monthly meetings by that name. The term as applied to the American Churches meant that the resolutions of their gatherings were not final until they were approved by the authorities of the Holland Churches."

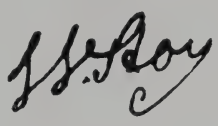
"The separation from Holland came in 1793, although for a number of years it had been felt that the connection with Europe was gradually weakening. The separation of the colonies from England in 1783, and the establishment of Constitutional government in the United States in 1789, helped to bring matters to a head. The American churches began to chafe under the restrictions of the Holland Church. It was felt that if the American Church was to have an existence of its own in this country, it must be free to determine its own policy."

"The most immediate reason for the separation was 'a constitutional difference on the right of ordination by the Coetus. This the deputies did not wish to grant, declaring that the applicants for the ministry in America could be examined, but not ordained until permission had first been gained from Holland.' The deputies wanted no unworthy men to enter the ministry, but the whole arrangement was clumsy and resulted in the following resolution of 1782, which we have already designated as a declaration of independence. 'Resolved, That the Coetus has a right at all times to examine and ordain those who offer themselves as candidates for the ministry, without asking or waiting for permission to do so from the fathers in Holland.' This was the decisive step which marked the separation

of the Reformed Church in Pennsylvania and vicinity from the mother Church in Holland."

REV. PHILIP JACOB MICHAEL

Rev. Philip Jacob Michael, pastor, 1753–1754. He was born in Germany, 1716. The Reverend Mr. Michael was an "independent" minister whom the Fathers in Holland, after earnest pleas, refused to ordain. He organized and served congregations in Berks and Lehigh Counties and is reported as having done excellent work. In 1769, he became founder of St. Michael's church in Upper Bern Township, Berks County. During the War of the Revolution, he resigned his pastorates and was, on May 17, 1777, appointed chaplain of the First Battalion of the Berks County Militia.

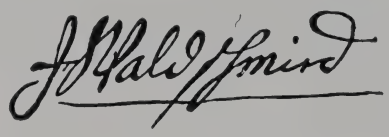


Rev. Henry William Stoy, pastor, 1755-1756. He was born on March 14, 1726, at Herborn, Germany, in the province of Hesse-Nassau and educated at the University of Herborn. He came to Pennsylvania in 1752 with Michael Schlatter. He served churches in Philadelphia, Lancaster and Berks County. In 1763, he returned to his home town, Herborn, where he studied medicine. In 1767, he was back in America where he accepted calls from congregations in Berks County. The Coetus refused him recognition and he made his home in Lebanon as a practicing physician. He continued as an independent minister.

"As a physician Stoy gained prominence and fame, especially through his cure for hydrophobia. General Washington's account book shows that he sent to him one of his servants for cure. He notes: 'Oct. 18, 1797. Gave my servant Christopher, to bear the expenses to a person at Lebanon, Pennsylvania, celebrated for curing persons bit by wild animals, $25.00.' His drops for hysterics, called 'Mutter Tropfen,' and his salve for itch also gave him notoriety, as

people sent long distances for his remedies. He was also active in introducing inoculation for small-pox, although many opposed it as an attempt to thwart providence." (Quoted from Hinke.)

Dr. Stoy died in Lebanon on September 14, 1801, and was buried in the cemetery at the Host church.



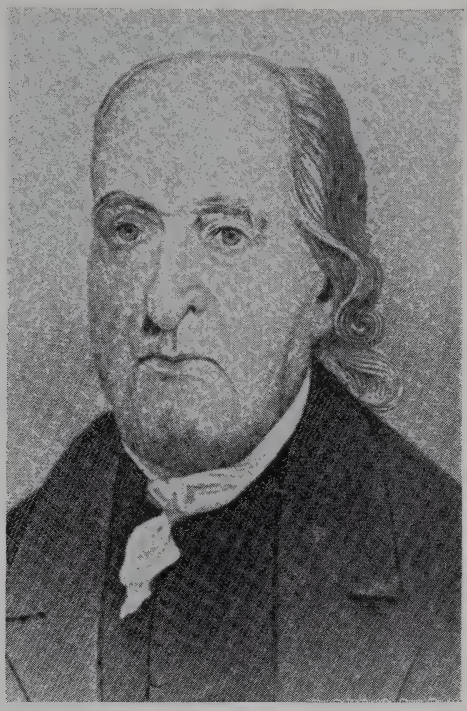
Rev. John Waldschmidt, pastor, 1756–1758—born on August 6, 1724, at Dillenburg, Germany, County of Nassau-Dillenburg. Studied at the University of Herborn. He came to Pennsylvania with Schlatter in 1752. His first communion in Reading was celebrated on October 31, 1756. Proved to be a worthy steward in his ministry.

He died September 14, 1786, and was buried in the cemetery of Swamp church, Berks County.

"An unusual circumstance happened in connection with the tombstone about seven years later, which was thought very singular and which is not only traditionally remembered but also recorded in the church book. On Sunday, June 2, 1793, 'when a large congregation was assembled in the church listening to the Word of God, and when the winds were quiet, the tombstone of Waldschmidt suddenly broke off at the top and fell flat on the tomb. Many saw it and all heard it fall.' The commotion in connection with this event was greatly increased in the minds of the people by the fact that Mrs. Waldschmidt, who had lost her mind long before and had not spoken a word for years, began to speak again on that same day." (Hinke.)

REV. PHILIP WILLIAM OTTERBEIN

Rev. Philip William Otterbein, pastor, 1758–1759—born on June 3, 1726, at Dillenburg, Germany. Educated at the University of Herborn. Note: The Reverend Mr. Otterbein supplied First Church for six months in 1755. (There was no pastor at First Church be-



Wilhelm Otterbein

tween the years 1760 to 1764. It was, however, during those years that the stone church was built.) He came with Michael Schlatter to Pennsylvania in 1752. In 1774, he became pastor of a congregation in Baltimore, Maryland. Shortly after his arrival in Baltimore, Otterbein began to introduce the old pietistic idea of forming societies and organizing class meetings. He felt a close kinship to the methods of the Methodists. During the last twenty-three years of his life, he attended the meetings of the Reformed Synod only four times. During this same period he took an active interest in the "great meetings" of the "United Brethren" and attended their annual conferences. Though he never severed his connections with the Reformed Church, his heart was in the pietistic movement of the United

Brethren. He is regarded as the founder of the United Brethren Church.

Mr. Otterbein died on October 17, 1813, at the age of eighty-seven years. He was buried in front of the Reformed Church on Conway Street, Baltimore.

REV. FREDERICK JULIUS BERGER

Rev. Frederick Julius Berger, pastor, 1765–1768—born April, 1740, at Sargenroth in the Rhine Province, Germany. Educated in the Gymnasium (College) at Zweibrucken and at the University of Basel. Mr. Berger was one of four missionaries sent by the Synods of Holland to Pennsylvania in 1765. The others were Henop, Pomp and Zufall. Upon their arrival, a special meeting of Coetus was called, October 16–17, 1765, to receive them and assign them their fields of labor. We quote from Hinke's "Ministers of the German Reformed Congregations, etc.,"

"Do. Berger, having been asked whether he would provide the church in Reading with the service of the gospel, and whether the congregation was able and willing to contribute the necessary salary, thereupon with the elder answered they would try it until the next Coetus and then would give further report (Minutes, 239)."

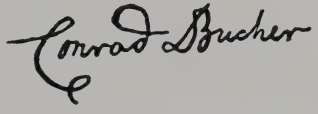
"In September, 1766, Berger reported having 140 families in Reading. He had baptized during the first year about 60 children, received 21 as members, and had from 40 to 50 scholars in the *parochial school.* But he reported his salary as being so small that he needed 'twelve pounds more to be able to live there.'

"In 1767 Berger was serving Reading and 'Meden Creek.' In the Muddy Creek Church record appears the following entry: 'Berger served the parish for two years from Reading.' This proves that Meden Creek was meant for Muddy Creek. His pastorate there and at neighboring churches, such as Cocalico and Seltenreich, must have been from 1765 to 1767."

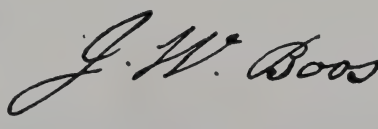
"But things were not going well with Berger. Even at the meeting of Coetus at Reading, in 1766, complaints came in from Muddy

Creek. He was accused of drunkenness 'and other consequent irregularities of life.' In 1767 similar complaints were presented by the congregation in Reading. The officers of Coetus had a private session with him, at which he not only confessed his faults, but promised to amend his life. He even made a public apology and preached a sermon from the text: 'Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the chief.' I Tim. 1:15 (Minutes, p. 264–266)."

He was dismissed as a member of the Coetus. He lived last in the mountains near Reading in poverty and "great misery." Of his last days and death, there is no record. Many members left the church because of him and it required many years to regain the former strength.



Rev. John Conrad Bucher, pastor, 1769–1770—born at Schaffhausen, Switzerland, on June 13, 1730. Educated in the college of his native city and at the University of Marburg. Mr. Bucher was definitely only a supply pastor, preaching every two weeks. He supplied the Reading church from Lebanon. He was devoted to his high calling and gave an excellent account of himself as a steward of the mysteries of divine grace. He died August 15, 1780, and is buried at Lebanon.

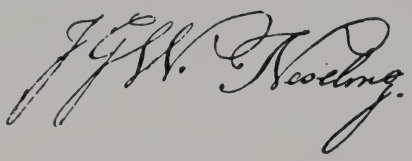


Rev. John William Boos, pastor, 1771–1781—born on September 8, 1740, at Otterburg, Germany, near Kaiserslautern, in the Palatinate. Studied at the Universities of Heidelberg and Utrecht. Three times Mr. Boos failed to pass his examinations before the Deputies of the Holland Synods. He was, therefore, not ordained. He came to America at his own expense and without credentials from the

fathers in Holland. He was not received as a member of Coetus but was allowed to become the pastor at Reading without official standing. He is reported in the Coetal minutes as having done excellent work in every respect. In his later ministry, however, he did not give a very good account of himself. He reported to the Coetus, 80 members and 86 in Parochial School.

He died on November 28, 1814.

Mr. Augustus F. Boas, Reading banker, and for thirty-seven years superintendent of the First Reformed Sunday School, was a grandson of Rev. John William Boos.



Rev. John Wessel Gilbert Neveling, pastor, 1782–1783—born in Westphalia, Germany, in 1750. Educated under the tuition of Rev. Daniel Gros and Rev. Casper Weyberg. Mr. Neveling was ordained in America contrary to the wishes of the Holland Fathers.

During the Revolutionary War, Mr. Neveling converted his estate into cash, amounting to about five thousand pounds. He lent the entire amount to the Congress, taking only a certificate as his security. He lost the total investment. Why he was never repaid is not known.

He served with distinction as an army chaplain in the Revolution, during which time the British government offered a substantial reward for his apprehension. He was held in high esteem by General Washington.

In May, 1783, he makes the following report to the Coetus in Philadelphia for the Reading congregation: "Families, 100; baptized, 12; confirmed, 10; and one Parochial school with 75 scholars."

In the fall of 1783, he suffered a stroke of apoplexy which disabled him for future service in the Christian ministry.

Many years of extreme poverty lay before him, for he attained the age of ninety-four years. By contributions received from the

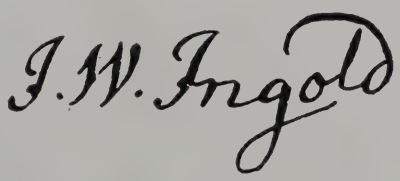
churches in Holland and in America, his physical needs and those of his family were scantily met. "Neveling bore his affliction with great patience and fortitude, seeking comfort in his Bible, till finally his eyesight failed him."

Mr. Neveling died in Philadelphia, where he last resided, on January 18, 1844. His remains rest in West Laurel Hill Cemetery.

REV. BERNARD WILLY

Rev. Bernard Willy, pastor, 1785–1786—born at Chur, Switzerland, on January 11, 1751. Trained for the Christian ministry under the personal tutorship of one of the ministers of his native canton. He served several pastorates in Switzerland before coming to America. He arrived in Baltimore on Tuesday, December 21, 1784. He went to Philadelphia and there was assigned to the Reading congregation. In January, 1786, Willy went to Muddy Creek, Lancaster County, and there married a young woman. It was only a short time, however, until it was revealed that he had a wife living in Switzerland to which fact he confessed. A committee of Coetus visited him at Reading, excluding him from the Coetus and deposed him from the Christian ministry. He left Pennsylvania and went to Virginia. There as an "independent" he began to work in a number of congregations. He evidently repented and was greatly humbled. He is reported as having done commendable work in Virginia to the end of his life. He was, too, the author of a number of books, all in the field of religion.

He died in Woodstock, Virginia, in May, 1810, and was buried in the Reformed Cemetery.



Rev. John William Ingold, pastor, 1786–1788—born on October 4, 1737, at Simmern, Germany, in the Palatinate. Educated at the University of Heidelberg. Mr. Ingold was the son of Rev. John

William Ingold who was assistant pastor of the Reformed congregation at Simmern in the Palatinate. The Rev. Mr. Ingold, Jr., was ordained by the Consistory of the Palatinate, May 10, 1762. He was approved by the Deputies of Holland and arrived in Pennsylvania in the fall of 1774.

"When Ingold left Easton in 1786, he went to Reading. A call to that congregation, dated September 4, 1786, is still in existence. In June, 1787, Ingold reported 100 families, 21 baptisms, 21 confirmations, and 40 scholars *in the parochial school.* His stay at Reading, lasting a year and a half, was filled with quarrels. Hence he was compelled to leave in *April, 1788.* The minutes of 1788 give the following report about Ingold: 'This man suited this congregation (Reading), in many respects, less than any one before. This appeared even in the first half-year. But, notwithstanding successive quarrels, he maintained himself till the present time, when Reading gave him his dismissal and requested Coetus for permission to call another minister, which was granted. What a peculiar man Ingold is, your Reverences can partly gather from this, that he left Reading on the very day the Reverend Coetus met there. Nevertheless, we do not mean to say that Do. Ingold is alone to blame."

He left the Coetus and became an independent minister, serving independent Reformed congregations. He ministered at Spies Church, Berks County, from 1790 to 1793 and at Amity Church, Berks County, from 1791 to 1796.

We could find no record of his death and burial.

Rev. John William Boos, 1789–1792 (Second pastorate).

REV. PHILIP REINHOLD PAULI

Rev. Philip Reinhold Pauli, pastor, 1793–1815—born on June 22, 1742, at Magdeburg, Germany. Educated at the Joachimsthal Gymnasium (College) in Berlin and at the University of Halle. Mr. Pauli was a descendant of a distinguished family of Christian ministers. His grandfather, the Rev. Herman Reinhold Pauli, was court preacher at Halle. His father, Rev. Ernest Ludwig Pauli, was court preacher at Bernberg.

Philip Pauli

Philip Reinhold Pauli arrived in this country in 1783. Early in 1793, he accepted a call from First Church which was approved by the Coetus in April, 1793. His coming infused new life and spirit into the congregation. Many had been the problems faced by the congregation during its first forty years of existence. There were long periods when there was no pastor on the scene. There were the problems of financial depression and war. Then, also, there were ministers who failed the congregation in spiritual leadership. The new hope inspired by the coming of Mr. Pauli was well founded. There appeared early evidences of his genuine Christian character, his spirit of industry, his leadership in matters of business and his pastoral concern for his people.

His first confirmation class (1793) numbered fifty-one persons. In 1797, there were 69; in 1810, there were 73; and in 1811, there

were 92. In 1814, he reported 511 communicant members. He kept complete records of his ministerial acts. He set to work at once to pay the debt incurred by the building of the stone church of 1761. A subscription in 1794 realized a return of 832 Pounds. The total debt was finally paid in 1814. Mr. Pauli attracted to himself capable men to assist in the management of the affairs of the congregation. Already in 1793, we discover the following names on the roll of the Consistory—Joseph Hiester, Peter Nagle, Philip Kremer, Jacob Yeager, Bolser Henrice, Daniel Rose, Jacob Bower, John Walter and John Riehm. A number of these men were prominent in the civil life of the community and nation. They gave a real sense of stability to the church by active service.

The Rev. Mr. Pauli ministered to the spiritual needs of Susanna Cox who was executed for murder on June 10, 1809.

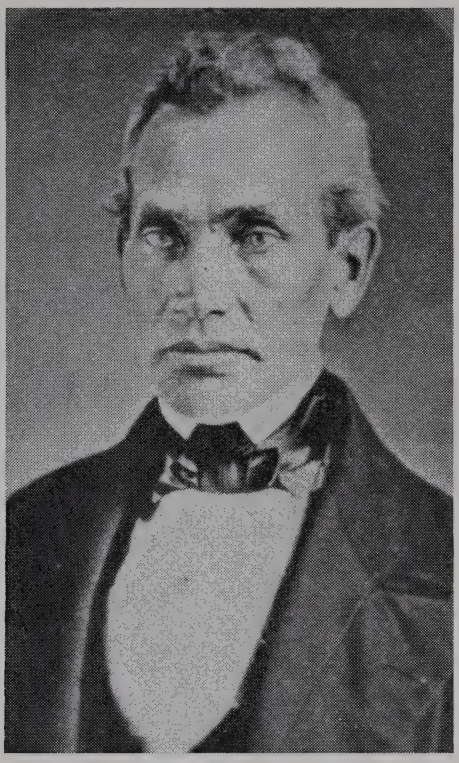
Mr. Pauli served the congregation for twenty-two years and laid firm foundations for future generations to build upon. His was a faithful and fruitful ministry.

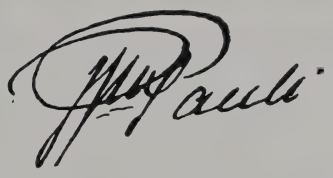
Mr. Pauli died on January 27, 1815, age seventy-two years. The funeral service was held in Trinity Lutheran Church because of its greater seating capacity.

Mr. Pauli was buried in the cemetery adjoining the First Reformed Church. In 1869, the body was re-interred in Charles Evans Cemetery.

REV. WILLIAM PAULI

Rev. William Pauli, pastor, 1815–1842. The Reverend William Pauli, son of Rev. Philip Reinhold Pauli, was born on March 9, 1792, in Skippack, Montgomery County, Pa., and educated under the tutelage of his father, Rev. Philip Reinhold Pauli. Mr. William Pauli was the first minister of the congregation born in this country. He was the brother of Charles Augustus Pauli who was for many years pastor of Hain's Reformed Church. When William Pauli was a candidate for the pastorate, there were five other names placed in nomination. He received fifty-five votes and his nearest competitor only five votes. He was licensed to preach in 1813 and ordained in





1816. During his entire ministry at First Reformed, he served a number of country congregations which militated against the effectiveness of his labors for the congregation which called him. This became more evident as time passed. His records of ministerial acts were carefully kept. He was not regular in his attendance at meetings of Synod nor in making reports to Synod.

The most important event in his ministry was the erection of the new brick church in 1831 to 1832. We are worshipping today in the edifice then built except that the original building was lengthened by sixteen feet in 1849. In 1825, Rev. Pauli reported 550 members.

Pastor and congregation were active in the union Sunday School venture begun in the Court House at Fifth and Penn in 1819.

Mr. Pauli's pastorate of twenty-seven years was one of diligent service but not as outstanding as that of his father.

Rev. William Pauli died in Reading on May 20, 1855, at the age of sixty-three. He was buried in Charles Evans' Cemetery.

REV. J. C. BUCHER

Rev. J. C. Bucher, D.D., pastor, 1842–1848—born on June 18, 1804, near Lingelstown, Pa., in Dauphin County. Educated at Harrisburg Academy and the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church in the United States, Carlisle, Pa. On May 16, 1842, the Rev. Mr. Bucher was called to the pastorate of First Church. The call and his very long and interesting acceptance are recorded in the minutes of the congregation. In the call he was promised "a salary of six hundred dollars, the use of a house, sufficient fire wood for the family, the services of a physician in case of illness of any member of his family, and expenses for moving from Middletown, Maryland, to Reading." A house was rented for $120.00 per year.

There are two respects in which pastor Bucher's coming marked a new era in First Church. First, it was in his pastorate that some English preaching was done. His predecessor, Rev. William Pauli, was unable to preach in English. Secondly, Pastor Bucher had a decidedly evangelistic spirit which stood in sharp contrast to his predecessor.

On August 30, 1842, the Consistory decided that the minutes thereafter be recorded in English. In pastor Bucher's first catechetical class in the spring of 1842, fifty were confirmed in English and ten in German.

In this pastorate, as in others, there was trouble by members who wanted free burial privileges in the church cemetery but who did not support financially the work of the congregation. A resolution demanding a minimum payment of one dollar per year was passed.

In 1844, Mr. Bucher informed the Consistory that an assistant

J. C. Bucher

pastor was needed. Rev. J. S. Kessler of Mt. Jackson, Virginia, was called at a salary of two hundred dollars per year and free residence in the school house. He served from 1845 to 1847.

In 1847, five members, whose names appear in the minutes, were reported as having attended a dance after having been warned by an elder. A special committee was appointed to admonish them, which was done, and the committee continued.

On the afternoon of April 24, 1848, the initial steps were taken for the organization of a second Reformed congregation in Reading, and on July 9, in the same year, twenty-five members of First Church were regularly dismissed for the purpose of organizing the "Second German Reformed Church of Reading." They, with five other persons, presented themselves and Mr. Bucher organized them as the

Second Reformed Church. Two elders and four deacons were elected, ordained and installed.

The Rev. Mr. Bucher was a fearless man. His preaching was ardent, revivalistic. His sermons were an hour to an hour and a half in length and his prayers as long as the average sermon length of today.

Two years after his pastorate in Reading, Mr. Bucher accepted the responsibility for raising $25,000.00 in the city and county of Lancaster for the purpose of moving Marshall College from Mercersburg to Lancaster. In this undertaking he was successful.

Franklin and Marshall College conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity in 1870.

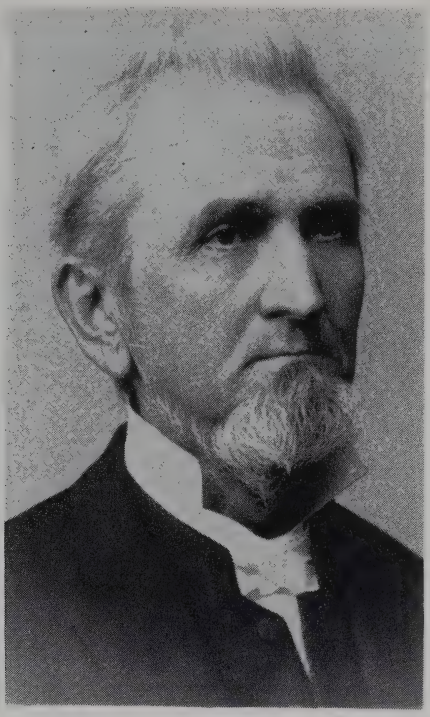
He died in Lewisburg, Pa., on November 15, 1888, at the age of eighty-four years.

Rev. John S. Kessler was Assistant Pastor, 1845–1847. He was born August 19, 1799, in Schiers, Canton de Grisson, Switzerland. He completed his theological studies in the University of Basel in 1821. He was a distinguished classical scholar, a man of exceptional ability and a person of noble character.

REV. AARON SEIBERT LEINBACH, D.D.

Rev. Aaron Seibert Leinbach, D.D., pastor 1848-1863—born on July 20, 1825, in Spring Township, near Reading, Pa., and educated at Marshall College and the Theological Seminary of the Reformed Church, both located at Mercersburg, Pa. Dr. Leinbach was a member of a family of Reformed pastors. His parents were the Rev. Thomas H. and Elizabeth (nee Seibert) Leinbach. He had two brothers and a son, and also a number of close and distant relatives who were pastors in the Reformed Church. The Leinbach name has been prominent for more than a century in the ministry of our denomination.

In one respect in particular, Dr. Leinbach stood forth in sharp contrast to his predecessor. His predecessor, Dr. Bucher, as indicated above, was a man of the revivalistic spirit. Dr. Leinbach, on the other



A. S. Leinbach

hand, held in high regard the liturgy, orders and rites of the church. He was respectfully conscious of the priestly functions of his ministry. In his preaching he stressed more the positive truths of the gospel as contrasted with sermons that are chiefly denunciatory of evil. In temperament, Dr. Leinbach was more conservative and better poised than Dr. Bucher. Daniel Miller, in his "History of the Reformed Church in Reading," makes this comment, "Some few members who had been ardent followers of Dr. Bucher are said to have left the Reformed Church at this time and united with others in organizing Zion's United Brethren Church."

During the pastorate of Dr. Leinbach, major remodeling projects were undertaken to which reference has already been made.

In February, 1850, the Consistory decided to rent pews to the members. It increased greatly the income but also created some real problems. The system was continued at least until 1905.

Dr. Leinbach did substantial work and was highly regarded by the congregation. During his pastorate, the membership of the congregation increased from 425 to 1000 members. Though this is a definite tribute to his person and labors, it should also be recalled that it was at a time of rapid increase in the population of the city which during his ministry advanced from fifteen thousand to twenty-five thousand.

In 1886, the honorary degree of Doctor of Divinity was conferred upon him by Franklin and Marshall College.

Dr. Leinbach was married a second time, his first wife having passed away at the age of thirty-eight years. His second marriage was to Miss Ann Elizabeth Wetzel, the exact name of a sister of the present pastor.

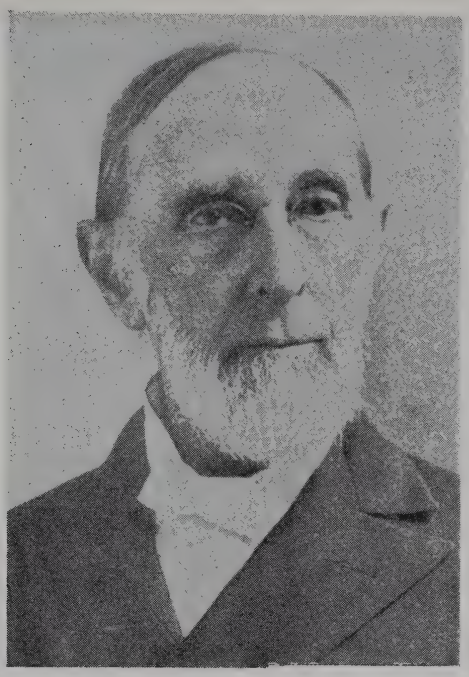
During the later years of Dr. Leinbach's life, he organized St. Thomas Reformed Church on North Eleventh Street. He served the congregation for several years and gave liberally for the erection of its house of worship.

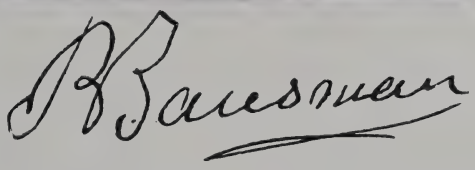
Dr. Leinbach died on June 22, 1896, at the age of seventy years. The memorial address was delivered by Dr. Benjamin Bausman. Interment was made in Charles Evans Cemetery.

REV. BENJAMIN BAUSMAN, D.D.

Rev. Benjamin Bausman, D.D., pastor, 1863–1872—born in Lancaster, Pa., on January 28, 1824. Educated at Marshall College and the Theological Seminary at Mercersburg, Pa. Dr. Bausman was called to the Reading pastorate from Zion's Reformed Church, Chambersburg, Pa. He was installed as pastor of First Church on November 1, 1863, by a committee of Lebanon Classis consisting of Revs. George Wolff, Henry Harbaugh, C. F. McCauley and William A. Good.

There were two matters to which Dr. Bausman gave early attention. The one was the formation of organizations within the con-





gregation to utilize the personal resources of his people. The other was the matter of church extension by the organization of new congregations which we have considered under the topic "Local Missionary Enterprise."

Problems which gave the pastor great concern were the question of serving a congregation, part of which wanted German preaching and another part of which desired English preaching; the question of organizing a new congregation for English preaching only; the matter of selling a portion of the church cemetery to provide funds for a new church; the provision of a site on the cemetery for the location of the new church, and finally the serious matter of exhuming and re-interring the bodies to make the land available for sale and use. These were problems of major significance. Under the wise

and prayerful leadership of Dr. Bausman they were, after some years of deliberation, solved. On December 26, 1872, St. Paul's Memorial Reformed Church was organized in the new chapel with 204 members, 198 of whom were dismissed from First Church. Dr. Bausman became pastor of the new congregation on January 1, 1873.

In the spring of 1872, an epidemic of typhoid fever spread over the city. Entire families were stricken by the disease. There were many deaths. Almost daily for some time there were from one to three funerals. The pastor visited the sick in the morning and evening and buried the dead in the afternoon. Heavy upon his heart lay the sorrows of his people.

Dr. Bausman had the work of the denomination at heart as well as the welfare of the congregations which he served. I think next to his congregation in his love was Bethany Orphans' Home. He was elected a member of its Board of Managers in January, 1865, and its president in the following March, in which capacity he served to the end of his life.

Besides this interest, he served on a number of Church Boards.

He was editor at one time or other of the following publications: The Messenger, the Guardian and the Hausfreund.

Dr. Bausman was a forceful preacher and a faithful pastor. His every act bore the distinct marks of his own personality because of his genuine sincerity, his unquestioned integrity and his Christian piety.

Of his personal character and Christian stature, we shall speak through his biographer, Rev. Henry H. Ranck who was pastor of St. Andrew's Reformed Church, Reading, from 1901 to 1914.

" 'Dr. Bausman was a gentleman, every inch a man; yes, he was a good man.' In these words Father Borneman, the distinguished Monsignor of the Roman Catholic Church in Reading, characterizes him."

"Like Phillips Brooks, Dr. Bausman was acutely affected by the weather: A bright day exhilarated him and he could work with

facility and power; a dark day beclouded his spirit and clogged the wheels of thought. Notes like these we find in the diary: 'Heavily clouded, dreary day which depressed me.' "

Dr. Bausman was an acutely sensitive person. "He once admonished a disorderly class before the Sunday School, and said, 'It gave me such a nervous shock, that I was in great mental agony for a few hours.' " His feelings were so keen, he could not disguise them.

"Few men knew him so well as Mr. Daniel Miller, who was in almost daily association with him for about forty years. Mr. Miller says 'Dr. Bausman was a sincere man. This was the universal impression of the community. Everybody regarded him as a true man of God. No matter how people may have differed from him, no one ever questioned his honesty of purpose.' "

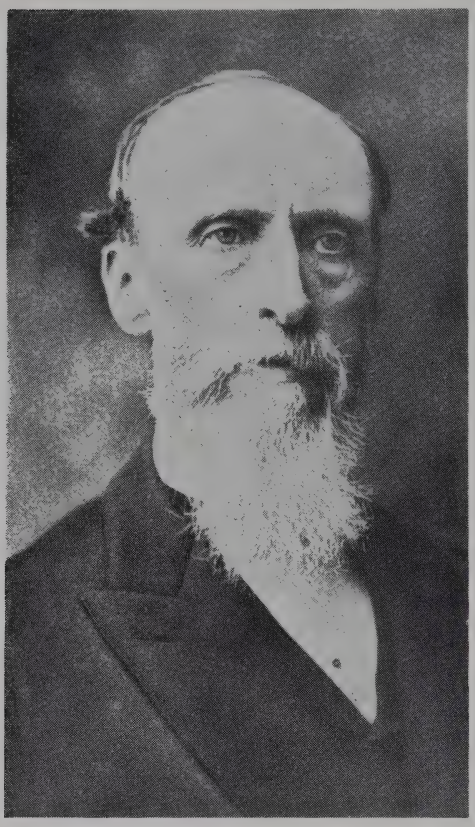
Dr. Charles E. Creitz, his successor in the pastorate of St. Paul's, wrote these words: "Men believed in Dr. Bausman because they saw in him a man who tried to live near to God, and succeeded better than most men do. . . . God was to him a living reality in his daily life."

Dr. Bausman died, after a ministry of forty-six years in Reading, on May 8, 1909, and was buried in Charles Evans Cemetery.

Following his death, a new church was built in Wyomissing and named in his honor as The Bausman Memorial Reformed Church.

REV. JOHN SUMMERS STAHR, D.D.

Note: Rev. John Summers Stahr, D.D., Professor at Franklin and Marshall College, and later its President, served as stated supply of the congregation between the pastorates of Dr. Benjamin Bausman and Dr. Henry Mosser. Dr. Stahr declined an invitation to become pastor of the congregation, preferring to continue his work at the college.



John S. Stahr.

REV. HENRY MOSSER, D.D.

Rev. Henry Mosser, D.D., pastor, 1873–1903—born on August 1, 1837, at Myerstown, Lebanon County, Pa. Educated at Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pa., and the Theological Seminary at Mercersburg, Pa. Rev. Henry Harbaugh Rupp was assistant pastor, 1901–1904.

Dr. Mosser was unanimously elected pastor on March 10, 1873. He was installed on June 14, 1873. One of the first duties of the

new pastor was the reorganization of the congregation. Dr. Bausman, his predecessor, had become the pastor of the new English congregation, St. Paul's, and with him into the new congregation went one hundred and ninety-eight members of First Church, including at least half of the Consistory. The matter of reorganization was speedily accomplished and the work of the congregation continued to prosper.

Concerning Dr. Mosser's problems during the first year of his pastorate, we quote from his own brief "History of the First Reformed Church in Reading," where he says: "He found a people who were weary of the controversies on language, church property, removal of the dead, and subjects incident thereto. They seemed ready to return to duty, especially since the house of worship urgently demanded repairs. The young people gathered into the school and the members heeded the call to come to the sanctuary. *The burden of the first year's pastoral calls was to hear the grievances occasioned by the removal of the beloved dead.* The comfort

of the living was more fearfully disturbed than that of the dead. The good taste and sentiment of the friends living were greatly shocked and outraged. Much pleading and long soothing ministrations were required to bring these families to their duty, notwithstanding the progressive movement now fully accomplished." (Italics are mine.)

Another claim upon the pastor's time and energies was the needed remodeling of the church building which proved a major operation. This matter is discussed in some detail in our chapter on "Church Buildings."

On February 17, 1875, the congregation voted on the question of changing the legal title of the church to "First Reformed Church of Reading, Pennsylvania." It was defeated though the Consistory later recorded its actions in that name. The above name was legally approved on October 26, 1931.

During the pastorate of Dr. Mosser, working hand in hand with Drs. Bausman and McCauley, the following congregations were organized and given nurturing care by First Church; namely, St. Mark's, Olivet and Trinity.

A significant service was held in First Church on March 13, 1879. It was a farewell for Rev. A. D. Gring, first foreign missionary sent out by the Reformed Church. Rev. Dr. C. H. Leinbach presided. Speakers were Drs. T. S. Johnston and J. H. A. Bomberger.

In 1896, a spacious room was built for the Adult Department of the Sunday School at a cost of nine thousand dollars.

On November 2, 1902, farewell services were held for Miss S. Emma Ziemer, missionary appointed to China. She was an excellent teacher in our Sunday School. Speakers at the service were Drs. Henry Mosser, A. R. Bartholomew and James I. Good.

Dr. Mosser served the Church-at-Large in many capacities. He was a member of the Board of Trustees of Palatinate College and its secretary for nine years. He was a member of the Board of Trustees of Franklin and Marshall College and was honored by that

college by having the degree of Doctor of Divinity conferred upon him in 1891.

Dr. Mosser properly complained that his worries with the church debt and material matters required much of his time which should have been given to spiritual service.

He was a good preacher, faithful pastor and zealous worker in the Lord's vineyard. In his last report to Classis, 1903, he states a membership of 1059.

He died on Sunday, February 13, 1910, at Myerstown, Pa., and was buried there.

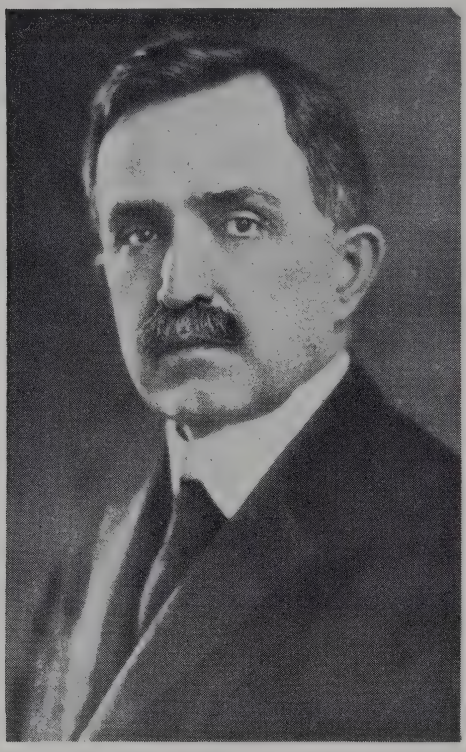
An appropriate inscription on the Memorial Tablet in First Church in tribute of Dr. Mosser, taken from the Book of the Acts of the Apostles, reads as follows: "For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and of faith: and much people was added unto the Lord."

REV. JOHN FRANKLIN MOYER, D.D.

Rev. John Franklin Moyer, D.D., pastor, 1904–1926—born in Union Deposit, Dauphin County, Pa., on August 12, 1861. Educated at Franklin and Marshall College and the Theological Seminary at Lancaster, Pa. Before Dr. Moyer entered educational institutions in preparation for the Christian ministry, he taught in the public schools of Dauphin County for four years. He became a teacher at the age of fifteen years.

He was called from the pastorate of Christ Reformed Church, Altoona, Pa., to become pastor of First Reformed Church, Reading. The call was signed by Elders Daniel F. Dietrich, Reuben Keen, F. K. Himmelberger, R. Monroe Hoffman, George W. Wagner, J. B. Bechtel; and Deacons Samuel Sailer, C. W. Shade, Charles S. Parsons, James M. Miller, M. R. Himmelberger and Charles K. Snell. He was installed on January 3, 1904, by a committee of Reading Classis, consisting of Drs. Benjamin Bausman, James I. Good and Rev. Charles E. Schaeffer.

Dr. Moyer began his pastorate under favorable circumstances. He



J. F. Moyer

addressed himself to his work with evident zeal and interest and was greeted with hearty response and large church attendances.

On May 13, 1910, a special meeting of the Consistory granted the request of the pastor to attend the World Missionary Conference at Edinburgh, Scotland, and tour Europe, in company with Dr. Charles E. Creitz, Missionary Henry Miller and his father, Daniel Miller.

On February 15, 1914, at 3:00 P. M., Memorial Services were held for Miss Sarah Emma Ziemer, member of the congregation and missionary to China, who had been accidentally killed by drowning while crossing lake Tung Ting for the first College Commencement

in Hunan Province. The date was December 23, 1913. In Reading, the Reformed Churches united in the Memorial Service in First Church. Addresses were made by the pastor, Dr. Moyer, and Drs. James I. Good, President of the Board of Foreign Missions, and Allen R. Bartholomew, Secretary of the Board.

On June 6, 1915, a Memorial Tablet, in honor and to the memory of Dr. Henry Mosser, was unveiled and dedicated in the church. Addresses were given by the pastor, Dr. Moyer, and Dr. John C. Bowman, President of the Theological Seminary at Lancaster, Pa.

On January 14, 1918, the pastor announced to his Consistory, a gift of $6,500.00 from Mr. Wellington Dietrich for the purchase of a new pipe organ. The organ then purchased is still in service. The question of placing the new organ in the chancel was considered and after consultation with architects it was decided to retain the former location which was the rear balcony.

March 3, 1919, paid $850.00 to War Emergency Fund.

On May 10, 1920, four hundred Reformed Church Hymnals were purchased.

In 1920, consideration was first given to the conversion of the parsonage adjoining the church into a Parish House for office and church school rooms. This was finally done in 1929 during the pastorate of Mr. Wetzel.

"Sunday, December 10, 1922. A special meeting of the Consistory was held immediately after the morning church service, the Pastor presiding. . . . The object of the meeting was to hear the report of the Committee appointed to offer an amendment to the Constitution and By-Laws. Article 3, Section 4 reads as follows: An election for two Elders, two Deacons and one Trustee shall be held annually on the first Monday of January in each year, between the hours of 7 and 9 o'clock P. M., and those chosen shall serve for a period of three years, or until their successors are chosen; no person shall be eligible to any of the aforesaid offices who is not a regular contributing and communicant member in good repute for Christian piety." The following action was taken which was as follows: "Section 4, Election

of Officers will read as amended: An election for two elders, two deacons and one trustee shall be held annually on the first Monday of January in each year, between the hours of 7:30 and 8:30 o'clock P. M., and those elected shall serve for a period of three years, or until their successors are elected. Elders, Deacons and Trustees shall not be eligible for re-election until one year after their term of office has expired. No person shall be eligible to any of the aforesaid offices who is not a regular contributing and communicant member in good repute for Christian piety." That portion of the above action which refers to the length of the term of office of elders, deacons and trustees is set forth in the Act of Incorporation in Section 10 which is quoted in the early part of this history. This means that by the action of 1922, the Consistory had either forgotten Section 10 of the Act of Incorporation or had misinterpreted it.

A number of renovations were made during Dr. Moyer's pastorate among them the replacement of gas lights with electric lights.

On October 6, 1924, Mr. Harvey H. Shomo, Treasurer of the Forward Movement reported subscriptions amounting to $30,399.50, and payment of $14,999.50.

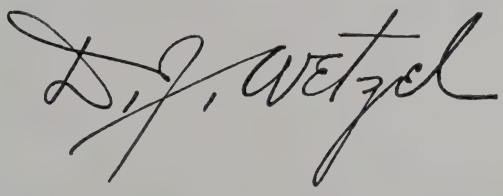
Dr. Moyer's last membership report was 1339 in May, 1926.

Dr. John F. Moyer died May 13, 1926, and was buried at Boyertown. Better than any words I could choose to describe the Christian stewardship of Dr. Moyer appear on the Memorial Tablet placed in the church in his honor which are as follows: "Given to hospitality, a lover of good; sober minded, just, holy, temperate, holding to the truthful word."

REV. DANIEL JACOB WETZEL, D.D.

Rev. Daniel Jacob Wetzel, D.D., pastor 1927—born in Beavertown, Snyder County, Pa., on July 22, 1888. Educated at Union Seminary, preparatory school at New Berlin, Pa., and Franklin and Marshall Academy, Lancaster, Pa., graduating in 1908. Graduated from Franklin and Marshall College in 1912, and from the Theological Seminary at Lancaster, Pa., in 1915.

Mr. Wetzel served St. Peter's Reformed Church, Frackville, Pa.,



from 1915 to 1920, and Grace Reformed Church, Shippensburg, Pa., from 1920 to 1927. He was called from the Shippensburg pastorate to First Church, the election and call bearing the date of November 1, 1926.

Mr. Wetzel was installed on Sunday, January 16, 1927, at 3:00 P. M. Dr. Elmer L. Coblentz delivered the charge to the pastor and Dr. Thomas W. Dickert, the charge to the congregation. Dr. Charles E. Creitz conducted the installation service.

Two major renovations were undertaken and completed, the main features of which have already been stated. The total cost of both

was about $108,000.00. The first project contributed much to a renewed life and spirit in the Church School. The second project enhanced the beauty of the sanctuary for worship.

The congregation has not only cared well for its local needs but has grown greatly in its benevolent contributions, having contributed to benevolence over $7,000 in 1953. It has supported loyally and generously the work of the church on the local scene and all the causes of the work of the Church-at-Large. Whatever of good has been accomplished during the present pastorate was due to an interested, vital and cooperative congregation with the work of God's kingdom at heart. All praise be to the congregation and to Christ, the Great Head of the Church who inspired their labors.

The congregation has a civic and ecumenical consciousness. Nationally and locally it has supported The Salvation Army, The Gideons, The Temperance League, The John Milton Society. During the Second World War, it gave support to our nation by the purchase of Defense Bonds. It was a contributing member of the Federal Council of Churches of Christ in America, and is now a contributing member of The National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U. S. A.

Locally, during the present pastorate, baccalaureate services were held in the church for Reading High School, The Reading Hospital School of Nursing, and Albright College.

The Church School has shown a vital interest in the Interdenominational School of Leadership Training, having students in the school annually since its organization in 1924, and also, periodically, members on its Board of Directors. Mr. William N. Kline, General Superintendent of our Church School, has served as Registrar of the Leadership Training School for many years. The pastor has served as teacher.

The Church and Church School have given regular and continuous support to the work of The Greater Reading Council of Churches, both by liberal contributions and by membership on its Board of Directors.

The congregation has granted its facilities for a number of years

for the assembly and class room work of the Central East District of Pennsylvania of the Hi-Y and Tri-Hi-Y Clubs.

Denominational groups, other than Evangelical and Reformed, have held assemblies in our church because of its spacious accommodations. Many interdominational meetings have been held in First Church. The congregation and Church School have supported the work of our Community Chest by service and gifts.

The pastor, hereby, pays high tribute to a Christian congregation of laymen and laywomen who have evidenced such a notable civic and ecumenical consciousness by their contributions of money and personal service.

Present church membership is 1,000 and church school enrollment, 513.

Mr. Wetzel served the denomination as a member of the Board of Trustees of Cedar Crest College since 1933; as President of the Commission on Higher Education of the Evangelical and Reformed Church for the first thirteen years of its existence and as a continuing member of the Commission; as Stated Clerk of Reading Classis for the years 1938–1940. He is author of the book "One Thousand Bible Readings," published by The Macmillan Company.

On Sunday morning, February 8, 1953, John Franklin Schaeffer, Jr., a member of the congregation, was ordained to the Christian ministry. The sermon was preached by his pastor on the theme, "Our Christian Ministry," based on the text, II Timothy, 4:5, "But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry." The liturgists were Dr. Paul T. Slinghoff, President of the Reading Synod, and Dr. Ralph J. Harrity, pastor of the Schaeffer family while they resided in Altoona. Elder John Franklin Schaeffer, father of John, presented his son for ordination. In May, the Rev. John Franklin Schaeffer, Jr., entered the chaplaincy of the United States Navy.

The congregation is well organized for Christian Service, and throughout the many changes and crises in community and national life, First Church has borne faithful Christian witness, true to her rich Protestant heritage and to the Lord Jesus Christ, the great Head of the Church.

Present Organization of the Congregation

THE CONSISTORY

Elders

Ross Sassaman
William B. McCabe
J. Franklin Schaeffer
John H. Reinhard
Charles D. Fisher
Francis H. Mills

Deacons

William R. Forry
J. Wendell Coblentz
Morris E. McKinney
John T. Bayley
Paul R. Troutman
William A. Schatz

Trustees

George N. Heckman
William L. Kalbach
Harry K. Hammond

Financial Secretary and Treasurer
Irvin H. Reinert

THE CHURCH SCHOOL

General Officers

William N. Kline
Superintendent

Morris L. Bossler
Statistical Secretary

Morris E. McKinney
Recording Secretary

Irvin D. Grieff
Assistant Secretary

John A. McGaughy, *Treasurer*

PRESENT ORGANIZATION OF THE CONGREGATION

CHURCH SCHOOL DEPARTMENTS

Cradle Roll

Mrs. Hans T. Moter, *Superintendent*

Nursery

Mrs. Stanley Loose
Superintendent and Teacher

Mrs. Joseph T. Kestner
Pianist

Mrs. Clarence L. Eddinger, *Secretary*

Kindergarten

Mrs. J. Herbert Kauffman
Superintendent

Mrs. Abbie Palm Musser
Secretary

Mrs. George L. Loose
Assistant Superintendent

Mrs. John A. Hibschman
Pianist

Teachers

Mrs. Frank E. Heins

Mrs. Sallie E. Wolff
Assistant

Mrs. Morris E. McKinney
Assistant

Miss Patricia A. Schatz, *Assistant*

Primary

Mrs. Arthur A. Jones
Superintendent

Mrs. William C. Eben
Secretary

Mrs. William J. Kretz
Assistant Superintendent

Mrs. Alice L. Tomney
Pianist

Teachers

Mrs. Paul Himmelreich
Mrs. Hendrik Wentink
Mrs. Edward L. Shank

Mrs. Charles N. Paff
Miss Louise Ann Gordon
Miss Nan P. Loose

FIRST REFORMED CHURCH

Junior

Mrs. Russell L. Reinhart, *Superintendent*

William A. Schatz
Secretary

Mrs. David P. Ketner
Pianist

Teachers

John T. Bayley
Frederick T. Baker
Mrs. William Kalbach
Mrs. George Boyer
Mrs. William A. Schatz

Junior and Senior High

Charles H. Miller, *Superintendent*

Mrs. Myrtle K. Bentz
Secretary and Pianist

Mrs. LeRoy A. Gensler
Assistant Pianist

Teachers

William R. Forry
Donald O. Ibach
J. Rau Koenig
Miss Helen G. Becker
Mrs. Donald O. Ibach
Mrs. C. Aubrey DeLong
Mrs. LeRoy A. Gensler

Young People

Irwin J. Bright, *Superintendent and Teacher*

William Kalbach
President

Miss Janet M. Koenig
Secretary

Adult

Harry Dunkelberger, *Superintendent*

Paul R. Troutman
Assistant Superintendent

Mrs. Owen B. Shockley
Pianist

The Orchestra

Byron W. Ibach
Elmer S. Snyder
Ralph Smith

Teachers and Officers—Women's Classes

The Friederica Lotz Class

Miss Friederica Lotz, Teacher

The Essie Gilbert Class

Mrs. Essie J. Gilbert, Teacher
Mrs. Fred E. O'Bold, Treasurer

The Mrs. Robert J. Ryan Class

Mrs. Robert J. Ryan, Teacher

The Anna L. Moyer Class

Mrs. Ralph H. Stetler, Teacher
Mrs. Emma Marburger, Treasurer
Miss Maggie K. Levan, Asst. Treasurer

The Emma R. Boone Class

Mrs. John J. Hartman, Teacher
Mrs. Thomas A. Wetty, Secretary-Treasurer

The Mothers' Class

Mrs. Emma S. Leeser, Teacher

Mrs. C. William Shade, President Emeritus

Mrs. Joseph Eschleman, President

Mrs. Byron W. Ibach, Vice President

Miss S. Mary Geissler, Secretary and Publicity

Mrs. Blanche Rissmiller, Treasurer

The Men's Bible Class

Teachers

John W. Forry
Burton R. Knerr
John A. Hibschman
Charles L. Gordon
Francis H. Mills
Rev. D. J. Wetzel

Officers

John A. Hibschman
President

Earl D. Wink
First Vice President

Winfield S. Fisher
Second Vice President

J. Franklin Schaeffer
Third Vice President

Russell L. Reinhart
Secretary

George N. Heckman
Assistant Secretary

John H. Reinhard
Treasurer

Team Majors

William Spatz
Morris E. McKinney

Team Captains

Harry K. Hammond
T. Price Rowlands
Ross Sassaman
Alvin L. Showalter
Winfield S. Fisher
John J. Overman, Jr.
John F. Sellers
Stewart F. Becker

Home Department

Mrs. Harry Gilbert, *Superintendent*

Auxiliary Organizations

The Mite Society

We believe the inspiration for the organization of the Mite Society developed from the action of a Special Consistory Meeting, September 16, 1850. We report the minute: "The object of this meeting arising from a collection having been taken on last Sabbath morning in the Church for the sufferers by the last Freshet—1st on motion Resolved that the Collection be distributed to the poor of the congregation; 2nd Resolved that two committees be appointed, one of Ladies to ascertain, first, who of the congregation have come to want from the late Freshet and if necessary the other poor of the Congregation and report to the Committee of Males who are to be appointed to make the distribution of the funds accordingly."

"Resolved that the Male Committee consist of 3 and Female Committee of 6. Males appointed were David Neff, Philip Zieber, William Ermentrout. Females were Mrs. Yeager, widow Smith, Elizabeth Shoemaker, Catharine Grose, Louisa Zieber and Catharine Ermentrout." H. C. Ritter, Secretary."

The date of organization was, according to the minutes of the Mite Society, March 11, 1856, when again the Schuylkill was flooded, leaving many in destitute circumstances. From 1856, the Mite Society has rendered continuous benevolent service.

The present officers are:

Mrs. C. William Shade, *President*
Mrs. Sadie Boyer, *Secretary*
Mrs. John J. Knoll, *Treasurer*

The work of the Mite Society is confined to the visitation of the sick, collection of dues, and benevolent giving to causes at home and abroad. Meets monthly.

The Women's Missionary Society

March 5, 1866, the following action was taken at a regular Consistory meeting. "On motion of brother Leize and McHose that our pastor (Rev. B. Bausman) be authorized to organize a Benevolent Society consisting of the members of this congregation, and to report some plan for the Government of the same." W. R. Yeich, Secretary.

On March 19, 1866, at an adjourned meeting of the Consistory a constitution presented by the pastor for the regulation of the Benevolent Society was adopted. The first officers were:

Rev. Benjamin Bausman, *President*
David Neff, *Vice President*
Cyrus Rick, *Secretary*
Peres Hain, *Treasurer*
Franklin Barnhart, *Asst. Treasurer*
Miss Sallie Fricker, *Asst. Treasurer*
Miss Emma Addams, *Asst. Treasurer*

Soon after the organization, the Benevolent Society was referred to as the Missionary Society. The name was officially changed on May 6, 1889. The action of the Consistory was: "Whereas, it is thought that greater efficiency and usefulness may be attained, therefore,

"Resolved, that the name of our Benevolent Society be changed and hereafter called, The Women's Missionary Society of the First Reformed Church."

"Resolved that the Executive Committee appropriate moneys to the several benevolent objects of the church—first paying the benevlent assessment of Classis."

"Resolved that the Missionary Society elect its own officers."

This society has had a continuous history since the date of its organization.

Present officers are:

Mrs. Harry Gilbert, *President*
Mrs. Harry K. Hammond, *Secretary*
Mrs. Harvey Kalbach, *Treasurer*

Programs are held monthly and confined to National and International Missionary education. Their contributions are given to benevolent causes.

AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

The Choir

The specialized ministry of music in First Church by organists, choirs, and leaders of singing is almost as old as the congregation. There was an organ in the Stone Church of 1761.

The present organization is as follows:

Mr. Norman A. Hiester, Organist and Choir Director.

Officers of the Choir:

John H. Forry, *President*
Milton D. Kohl, *Vice President*
Mrs. Owen Schockley, *Secretary*
Morris L. Bossler, *Treasurer*

The Ladies' Guild

The Ladies' Guild was organized on November 28, 1889 (Dr. Henry Mosser, pastor), under which date is recorded the first minute and acts of organization.

The second meeting of the Society, December 19, 1889, reports a charter membership of forty-three persons with a list of the names appended. A Constitution was adopted, designating the official name "The Young Ladies' Guild of First Reformed Church." The object of the Guild as stated in the constitution was "to cultivate the spirit of worship and make themselves available to the congregation and pastor for church work."

The first officers of the Guild were:

Tillie Esterly, *President*
Martha High, *Vice President*
Mary Herbein, *Secretary*
Laura Seiders, *Treasurer*

The present officers are:

Mrs. J. Herbert Kauffman, *President*
Mrs. Morris L. Bossler, *Vice President*
Miss Mary Geissler, *Secretary*
Miss Bertha V. Price, *Treasurer*

The Guild has loyally supported benevolent causes at home and abroad and has contributed to local church projects.

The Sewing Circle

The organization meets weekly to do quilting. Financial support is given to local and foreign charities and also to congregational needs.

The officers are:

Mrs. Anna L. Moyer, *President*

Mrs. John Hodgkins, *Treasurer*

The Altar Guild

The guild cares for the chancel and altar, changing the paraments as designated for the church year. It directs the distribution of floral gifts to the sick and aged.

Present officers are:

Mrs. Harry Gilbert, *Chairlady*
Mrs. Sadie Boyer, *Secretary*
Miss Friederica Lotz, *Treasurer*

The Ziemer Guild

This guild was organized on January 16, 1945. The object was to unite the younger women of the congregation in an organization for effective church work. It was named for Miss Sarah Emma Ziemer, missionary to China from First Church, 1902 to 1913. The monthly programs are of a general educational character and social.

Present officers are:

Mrs. Stanley W. Loose, *President*
Mrs. Joseph T. Kestner, *Vice President*
Mrs. Arlin E. Keiser, Secretary
Mrs. John J. Hartman, *Treasurer*

AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

The Youth Fellowship

Present officers are:

Berneice L. Klink, *President*
Barta L. Fenstermacher, *Vice President*
Patricia A. Schatz, *Secretary*
Susan Bright, *Treasurer*

Leader, the Rev. John Franklin Schaeffer, Jr. until his recent entrance into the Chaplaincy of the United States Navy.

Counsellors

Miss Marie Kaputo
Miss Barbara J. Koenig
Mr. and Mrs. William R. Forry
Mr. and Mrs. Paul R. Troutman

The Women's Guild

The Women's Guild is a denominational organization which was created several years after the merger of the Reformed Church in the United States and the Evangelical Synod of North America. The merger was consummated on June 26, 1934.

Our own Guild was organized on February 18, 1942. Its membership includes all the women of the congregation. It meets semi-annually. Its program covers all the major phases of the denomination's work.

Present officers are:

Mrs. George W. Boyer, *President*
Mrs. Paul R. Troutman, *Vice President*
Mrs. Harvey Kalbach, *Secretary*
Mrs. J. Franklin Schaeffer, *Treasurer*

Departmental Leaders are:

Mrs. Harry Gilbert, *Missions*
Mrs. Robert J. Ryan, *Spiritual Life*
Mrs. Morris L. Bossler, *Thank Offering*
Mrs. J. Rau Koenig, *Christian Citizenship*
Mrs. Paul R. Troutman, *Social Service*
Mrs. John J. Hartman, *Education*
Miss Helen G. Becker, *Stewardship*
Mrs. Russell L. Reinhart, *Membership*

The 200th Anniversary Program

The Program as set forth below has been planned for the formal celebration of the 200th Anniversary of First Reformed Church in the month of October, 1953. Though, at this writing, it is not as yet history, it has been included in this history as an item for future reference.

SUNDAY, October 4—Holy Communion at 11:00 A. M. and 7:30 P. M.

SUNDAY, October 11—"The Ministry of Music" at 11:00 A. M. with an address by the Rev. Frank W. Teske, D.D., Pastor of St. Mark's Evangelical and Reformed Church, Easton, Pennsylvania, on the theme, "The Place of Music in Christian Worship."

THURSDAY, October 15—Interdenominational Worship at 8:00 P. M., with greetings by the Rev. Harold C. Hollinger, President of the Reformed Ministerial Association of Reading and vicinity; the Rev. Robert S. Smethers, Jr., President of the Ministerial Association of Reading, Pennsylvania; the Rev. Mervin A. Heller, Executive Secretary of the Greater Reading Council of Churches. The historical address by the Rev. Lee M. Erdman, D.D., Pastor of St. Thomas Reformed Church, Reading, Pennsylvania. Exhibit of many historical items.

SUNDAY, October 18—"Education in First Reformed Church" at 11:00 A. M., with address by the pastor, Rev. Daniel J. Wetzel, D.D. Historical exhibit. Greetings by the Reverend Edward O. Keen, D.D., Pastor Emeritus of Memorial Evangelical and Reformed Church, York, Pennsylvania, and son of First Reformed Church, Reading, Penna.

THE 200TH ANNIVERSARY PROGRAM

WEDNESDAY, October 21—Congregational Fellowship Banquet at the Abraham Lincoln Hotel at 6:30 P. M. Address by the Rev. Alfred Nevin Sayres, D.D., Professor of Practical Theology in the Theological Seminary at Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Greetings by the Reverend Delas R. Keener, Pastor of First Evangelical and Reformed Church, Schuylkill Haven, Pennsylvania, and President of Reading Synod.

SUNDAY, October 25—The Anniversary Service at 11:00 A. M., with sermon by the Rev. David Dunn, Professor of Church History in the Theological Seminary at Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Exhibit of historical items.

THURSDAY, October 29—Memorial Concert at 8:00 P. M. by Elizabeth Zug, pianist and Virginia Zug, soprano, in loving memory of their parents, Mr. and Mrs. Nathan W. Zug, active members and officers in First Church.

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